

*Love, Letters, and Spells: Short Story and Screenplay*

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

*Gina Klaff*

**Thesis Advisor**

*Professor Kathryn Gardiner*

**Ball State University**

**Muncie, Indiana**

*May 2020*

**Expected Date of Graduation**

*May 2020*

## **Abstract**

Fairy tales are often the first stories that children read and they are often the first films that children watch while growing up. However, many of these stories do not depict women in roles of importance and essentially none of them depict characters that could be considered members of the LGBTQ+ community. Since it is so important for everyone to feel represented in media, I decided to create a fairy tale where a majority of the main characters were female and the main character herself is a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I also adapted my story into a screenplay in order to explore the journey that a story has when shifting between formats, and how there are various ways to tell the same story.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Professor Kathryn Gardiner for advising me throughout this project and for acting as a sounding board for all of my ideas about talking trees. Thank you for pushing me as a creative writer and for reminding me to always keep writing. I would also like to thank Professor Ben Bascom for helping me learn more about spinsters and for giving me writing, reading, and life advice.

I would like to thank Victoria, Rose, Angela, and Shawna for cheering me on and texting me at 1 a.m. to talk about my thesis, life, and everything in between. I would also like to thank my parents and my grandparents for supporting me and encouraging me to finish strong.

## Table of Contents

“Love, Letters, and Spells” Short Story.....	5
<i>Love, Letters, and Spells</i> Screenplay .....	47

## Process Analysis Statement

Ever since I decided I wanted to be a writer, I knew I wanted to write stories that everyone could connect to and enjoy in some way. This is the same thought I had when I started coming up with ideas for my thesis. I knew I wanted to write a fictional short story because fiction is my favorite genre to read and write for. I also knew that I wanted to write a story that had feminist and LGBTQ+ themes because those are issues that I personally care about and I feel that we still need more stories with strong female and LGBTQ+ characters.

Although I knew what sorts of themes I wanted to explore pretty quickly, I didn't know what kind of story I wanted to tell until much later. When deciding what kind of story I want to tell, I usually turn to my interests. At first I considered writing a romantic comedy or realistic fiction because those are the genres I read the most, but I wasn't really feeling inspired by those genres. Then, one day I was reading a book of fairy tales that I have and thought about how well a fairy tale would work as a platform to present feminist and LGBTQ+ themes. In most fairy tales, women are not often placed in roles of importance and there are no queer characters, but the term "queer" is used in many fairy tales to describe something out of the ordinary or strange. Even though women in fairy tales are not usually in roles of importance, if they do have power they are often placed in the role of a witch or a trickster who traps young men and manipulates people.

This idea that women are deceptive is relevant to many feminist arguments about how there is a preconceived notion that women are deceptive and that this idea is amplified by the way women are portrayed in media or spoken about in every day life. I wanted to address this issue because I did see it as a common theme in many traditional fairy tales and I decided to write a fairy tale about a witch who uses her knowledge and her powers for good and she wants

to feel accepted and find love. I wanted to use the character of a witch as a metaphor for being queer because in fairy tales and history witches have been seen as different and wrong as compared to everyone else, similar to how the LGBTQ+ community is still viewed today.

I did do some research before writing and most of the research I did was more about spinsters and how single women were viewed throughout the 1800s and the 1900s. I wanted my fairy tale to be set in medieval times rather than the present day, and back then it was unusual for a woman to stay single and live alone and women were usually married by the time they were in their teens or early twenties. While this had changed to some extent by the 1800s, the idea that a woman should focus on getting married and having children before she got too old was still relevant. If you were a woman who lived alone in medieval times and you were a bit older and unmarried you could also be seen as queer, and this fit the narrative and character profile I was beginning to establish.

My goal when creating my main character was to create a person that was different compared to the people around her while also reinforcing the fact that she wasn't doing anything wrong by choosing to live her life the way she did. Overall, I wanted to create a cast of characters that included several strong women of different ages in different positions. For example, my main character is a single woman who is a witch but her friend in town is a slightly older woman who is married and has children and helps her husband run their bakery.

Besides writing a short story, I also wanted to write a screenplay or adapt my short story into a screenplay. To me, books and movies go hand in hand and there are so many movies that have been inspired by books or graphic novels and vice versa. I've always been interested in the argument: "The book was better than the movie". As an avid reader who loves seeing my favorite books get turned into movies and TV shows, I've thought a lot about this argument over

the years, but as a writer I've also thought about the process of taking a book and turning it into something visual. After taking a screenwriting class my junior year, I started to realize all the different things you have to consider when taking a piece of writing and turning it into a screenplay. For example, how can you show the viewer what you're reading on the page? If there's an important symbol or metaphor, how can that be visually portrayed? Are there moments that can be omitted or presented in different ways to make them more visually appealing or immersive? Transposing my story into a screenplay reminded me that I had to make the world I was creating as believable as possible, not just in the screenplay but also in my original short story.

I didn't finish my short story or start writing my screenplay until after classes had been moved online and I was sheltering in place at my parent's house. This transition helped my creative process because I had the freedom to write down ideas whenever they came to me rather than waiting until I was out of work or class. However, because I could essentially write whenever I felt like it, this also made it easier for me to procrastinate. I had to create a balance by making sure that I set time aside to write every week but that I was also taking breaks if I needed them. I also felt that I was able to be more diligent during my revision process during this time than if I had still been at school because I was also able to put more work into creating an environment that encouraged me to write. The whole experience of sheltering in place and not knowing what will happen next did help me develop parts of my story, especially the moments where my main character is worrying about if her and her friends who are also witches and wizards will be able to come out of hiding and have normal lives again after their identities have been discovered.

Overall, my fairy tale is a quest narrative that acts as an extended metaphor for the problems that are relevant in our society today. The story that I wrote is also one of self-discovery, friendship, and acceptance. While I believe most people associate fairy tales with children, I hope that this is a story that everyone can enjoy and perhaps even relate to.



**“Love, Letters, and Spells”**

**by**

*Gina Klaff*

*My dearest Molly,*

*I am sorry it's been so long since our last correspondence. I would have written sooner, but I was caught up in creating just the right charm for exterminating a rather pesky poltergeist that has been disturbing the Silvermans for quite some time now. The foul creature nearly destroyed Eliza's teddy bear in the process! Thankfully, it has been dealt with and now the Silvermans can finally get a good night's rest.*

*Thank you for belladonna seeds you sent me with your last letter! They have been very helpful in curing the recent coughing fits that have been plaguing the local children. I promise to send you some of my prized garlic in exchange. It seems as if you always know just what to send me. Then again, even though you are my mentor you are still my dear friend.*

*Bennett has informed me that his rabbit population has made a comeback! What exactly happened to them? It must have been a sickness of spectacular proportions if it took out half a population of rabbits. They are, as you know, vivacious creatures.*

*Other than that, things have been quiet for me. Everything is running as smooth as can be, but I do have a rather important question for you. Do you use any sort of flavoring in the buttercream icing for the baron's strawberry cake? Strawberry, raspberry, lemon? I must know. Also, please do tell me about how the situation with the Wilson's possessed barn turns out, and how you remedied the situation. And make sure you write Lottie about it as well. I mentioned it to her and she has expressed an interest.*

*Love,*

*Nina*

“May I help you?”

I looked up from my letter, the ink barely dry, to see a slightly scruffy young man named Arlo standing in my doorway. He wasn't one of my regular customers but I knew him from around town. He and a group of other young men were usually spotted dallying about in the market during the day and laughing raucously in the tavern come sundown.

I was used to people barging in if they had an urgent matter that needed my attention, like if a demon had taken residence in someone's cupboard. But Arlo simply stood in my doorway, shifting his weight from foot to foot, sweeping his gaze over my kitchen.

He nodded at me before stepping into my cottage, leaving the front door open.

“I want you to make me a love potion,” Arlo said in a commanding tone that I was not very fond of. “There is a girl who has been unreceptive to my advances. Normally I wouldn't take this so seriously, but she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen and I am intent on marrying her.”

I frowned. Making love potions was a fool's errand. The healing potions and protective charms that I created required herbs, plants and flowers, and the occasional basic magic enchantment. The effects of these potions and charms had a very low margin of error and were usually permanent. Love potions can never be permanent because they alter someone's feelings and their heart rather than their body. The heart is a fickle thing and can't be so easily swayed by magic. Once the potion wears off, things go back to the way they were before. A love potion is essentially a manipulation of someone's feelings, which I feel is morally wrong.

That's also not taking into consideration the fact that love potions require a physical piece—usually something like hair—from the two people that you are trying to create chemistry between, and that whole business can sometimes become a mess all on its own. I once heard of a

wizard who accidentally made a human man fall in love with his pet dog. A dog! All because he had gotten the wrong lock of hair off the poor sap's waistcoat.

"I cannot do as you wish. Love potions are essentially liquid lies," I explained my reasoning as Arlo's brows furrowed, his mouth already pulled into a tight line.

"Then direct me to someone who will make me one."

"I do not know of any witch or wizard who would make you what you ask for. That sort of potion is not highly thought of."

Clearly he did not understand the meaning of the word "no".

"Listen here, witch," Arlo fumed, the anger in his eyes burning hotter than the flame under my cauldron. "I don't expect you to know what love feels like, but that doesn't mean that exempts you from helping me win the hand of this girl. I demand that you do as I wish."

I pushed my chair back from the table and stood up, drawing myself up to my full height to look this pest in the eye, my quill still firmly clutched in my fist.

"I suggest that you leave while you can," I replied coolly. "I may not make love potions, but that does not mean I am above making other sorts of potions and spells. And the ones I am imagining will do nothing to help you."

Arlo gave me one more withering look before turning on his heel and storming out of my cottage. The force of the slamming door caused the flames of the nearby candles to shudder before once again burning steadily.

I didn't scare easily, but I couldn't help but shudder. Something about the way Arlo spoke worried me. I had been threatened by others in the past, but something about his anger and the look in his eyes made this situation seem different from the ones before. I also couldn't help

but be a bit concerned for the young woman that he seemed to be interested in. A passionate man could be endearing, but also dangerous depending on what he is passionate about.

I sat back down with a sigh as I slipped my letter to Molly into an envelope and placed it in a woven basket near my feet. I looked out the window and was met with the intensity of the sun's afternoon rays seeping into my house. I stretched my arms above my head and stood up once again. It was already noon and I had plenty of chores left to do.

I spent the rest of my afternoon tidying up my house, weeding my herb garden, and bottling a few potions that I had made advance. I normally didn't leave my house unless I was making house calls for my clients, so I usually had more time on my hands than most people to clean and do other household chores.

I was preparing to turn in for the evening when I heard someone frantically knocking on my door. I pulled my emerald robe tighter around my shoulders and went over to open my front door. I was surprised to see Margaret, the baker's wife and a friend of mine, standing outside still dressed, her shoulders heaving.

"Is something the matter, Margaret?" I asked, beckoning for her to step inside.

"Something has gone horribly wrong," she replied, shaking her head. "I came as quickly as I could to warn you."

"Warn me?" I furrowed my eyebrows, not understanding what was happening.

"Arlo has told the entire town that you're a nasty witch who threatened to curse him. They plan to arrest you and burn you at the stake!"

I felt the color drain from my face. That inconsiderate imp had revealed my secret to the entire town because I had refused to do as he wished. Thank goodness for Margaret, though. She and I had been friends ever since I had moved to town a couple years back, and she had known I

was a witch for just as long. It had all started when a demon decided to make its home in her and her husband's kitchen and tormented them daily by throwing flour and the occasional bread knife at them while they were working.

"You must leave at once! A mob is already on their way here!" Margaret desperately implored, tugging at my hands to pull me towards my well-worn satchel and cloak that hung from a hook near my front door.

Margaret thrust my cloak into my hands before grabbing my satchel and running to my kitchen to grab my potion kit, jars of herbs, and a loaf of bread. She began hurriedly but delicately arranging my possessions in the satchel, her fingers fluttering over each item like a hummingbird's wings

I ducked into my bedroom to gather up a handful of clothes, a freshly washed apron, and a thick blanket from my closet. I gave my room one last glance before hurrying back into the living area, nearly bumping into Margaret as she handed me my packed satchel. I looked up at her, trying my best to hold back tears.

"I put a bit of my raspberry jam in there for you." Margaret lightly patted my hand and gave me a small smile, the corners of her eyes crinkling ever so slightly.

"I don't know where you're going, but this can be like a little comfort from home."

"Thank you," I nodded, doing my best to return Margaret's smile. "Now we must both go. Heaven only knows what will happen if anyone finds you here."

I shoved my apron and some of my clothes into the satchel and draped everything else over my left shoulder. I blew out the last lit candle that was on the kitchen table, grasped Margaret's hand, and led her out the front door.

“Be careful,” Margaret cautioned, before flipping the cowl of her cloak up to cover her face. The sound of a mob was already becoming clear, slicing through the stillness of the night. I could even see the light from torches illuminating the square.

I put up the cowl of my own cloak before sprinting off towards the forest, grateful for the full moon that lit my way. I was going somewhere that I had not been for some time. I was going somewhere that I had hoped I would never have to return to.

It was not until early the next day that I arrived at my destination: an enchanted hideout deep in the forest where witches and wizards came to seek sanctuary if our identities were ever revealed. Not everyone thought fondly of witches and wizards and we had to carefully conceal our identities. While many of us were able to get away with living in the same town for many years, some of us had to move regularly or run the risk of being discovered. People would rather believe the terrifying tales they heard about witches and wizards cursing and poisoning everyone who looked at them the wrong way instead of trying to understand us and our craft.

I parted the branches of the last group of trees and entered a clearing that had cottages scattered throughout it. The dawn gave the entire area a peaceful, quiet feeling and it seemed as if someone could walk out of one of the houses at any given moment. Still, I was fairly certain that they were all without occupants. I kept correspondence with many other witches and wizards besides Molly, and from what I could tell, nobody was experiencing any hard times.

I began walking over to the nearest cottage, my feet begging me to not take another step. I found myself giving in and sat down in the grass, the morning dew slowly soaking into my

dress like water into a sponge. I shrugged off my pack and set my other belongings down next to it. I looked up and admired the sun's glorious orange rays stretching endlessly across the cobalt blue of the sky. Tears began to slowly drip from my eyes and mix with the dew.

Thoughts of the events that brought me here swam to the surface of my mind and clawed and pulled at me in attempt to drown me in my sadness. What really hurt were the thoughts of the people I had left behind. Today was Thursday, but I was not going to get eggs from Mrs. Sutter and Allen would not come to tell me if the special tea I had made him had helped break his sister's fever. I would not stop to pet Mr. Bailey's horse Peppermint, nor would I go out into the meadow to pick wildflowers for my kitchen table.

I swiped at the tears on my cheeks and did my best to keep my thoughts at bay. I had to keep reminding myself that thanks to Margaret's bravery I was at least alive.

"It is never a joyful thing to see any of you come back here."

A nearby oak tree sighed, one of his branches slowly lowering to rest on my shoulder. "Even if it's selfish to say so, I must admit that I have missed your company, Nina."

"I've missed you too, Michael," I gave Michael a small smile and placed my hand on another one of his branches, his facial features slowly beginning to morph into view in the middle of his trunk.

"Well, what about me?" Ralph, a sycamore tree piped up from a few feet away. "You can't just say you miss Michael and then not tell me that you miss me too!"

I exchanged a grin with Michael before rushing over and throwing my arms around Ralph's trunk.



“Of course I’ve missed you,” I told Ralph. Ralph’s branches quickly moved to encircle me in an embrace, his bark rough and scratchy, but still comforting, on the back of my neck. “You’re one of my oldest and dearest friends.”

A tree’s embrace feels as if the entire forest is protecting you and keeping you safe. The touch of their branches feels as if they are reaching inside your soul and comforting it. It’s a feeling that is indescribable and can only be felt.

“Oldest? I’m not that old!” Ralph spluttered while Michael and I chuckled. I was glad that in the midst of turmoil, I had friends who could make me smile.

“What brings you to the clearing?” Michael asked as I moved to stand between the two trees once again.

“A young man in my town told everyone that I was a witch and that I had threatened to curse him. They were going to burn me at the stake had my friend Margaret not come to warn me.”

“What a nasty devil!” Ralph declared, wrinkling his nose. “Why would he make up such lies?”

“Yesterday he came to me and asked for me to make him a love potion. When I refused, he became angry and demanded that I make him one. I became rather harsh with him in order to scare him off, and I’m assuming he told the townspeople some exaggerated story so he had a reason to take revenge on me.”

“How awful!” Sarah, a nearby apple tree piped up. “You poor dear! For you to arrive here at this hour, you must have traveled without any rest.”

“I didn’t have much of a choice,” I sighed. “I was also too afraid to stop anywhere. I didn’t know if anyone would be following me.”

“You must rest at once,” Sarah commanded. She used her branches to nudge me into a standing position, her leaves tickling the back of my hand. “I do not want you fainting or getting sick.”

“I should talk to Roselia before I rest,” I yawned, fatigue suddenly washing over my body. “She’ll want to know I’m here.”

Roselia was the fairy queen who protected the clearing and another good friend of mine. Molly was my mentor and had taught me most of what I knew about potions and charms, but Roselia was the one who had taught me how to raise flowers and other plants and which ones I could use to create healing potions.

“Talking to Roselia can wait,” Michael replied.

“I’m sure she will understand why you waited to see her,” Ralph reassured me.

“Well if she comes by, please tell her I didn’t forget about her.”

“We will. Now go,” Sarah gave me one final nudge, while Ralph and Michael both smiled at me.

I gathered up my things and turned towards the nearest cottage, pushed the door open and stepped inside. I pulled open the curtains, light streaming in through the windows illuminating the layers of dust that coated every surface I could see. I would have to clean, but that was something else I could worry about later.

I laid my satchel and belongings down on the kitchen table and undid the clasp on my cloak. My eyes widened when I looked down and realized that I was still wearing my nightgown and robe. I sighed and shrugged the robe off and hung it on a hook next to my cloak before heading into the bedroom. I sat down on the bed, unlaced my shoes and cast them aside before wriggling under the covers and finally giving into the sweet embrace of sleep.

The heat from the harsh afternoon sun awakened me some hours later, and as I sat up in bed I felt a slight panic overtake when I realized that I was not in my house. The events of last night and my journey to the clearing flooded back to me and I yawned as I stretched my arms above my head like a flower growing towards the sun.

I hopped out of bed, deciding that I needed to at least change into real clothes and clean myself up a bit. I didn't want to go see Roselia in the state I was currently in. I began rummaging through my satchel and pulled out undergarments, my bodice, and a clean skirt and chemise. I hurried into my clothes, ran my fingers through my tousled black hair, and stepped outside, not even bothering with my shoes.

I walked briskly past the rest of the cottages in the opposite direction of Ralph, Michael, and Sarah until I came to a sprawling flower garden filled with roses, lavender, begonias, buttercups, daisies, and many more flowers than I could name. I walked through the soft petals and waxy leaves until I came to the biggest, reddest roses one has ever seen. Hovering above one of the roses was a small orb of light, that upon my arrival, slowly began to grow in size until I could make out the body and face of the fairy queen herself.

"Nina," her voice, soft yet clear as a silver bell greeted me warmly and I felt myself smile. "When did you get here?"

"Earlier this morning. I'm sorry, I would have come to see you sooner, but I had been traveling all night."

"No need to be sorry. I assumed you had your reasons," Roselia replied, returning my smile. She waved her hand, and a soft sprinkling of water began falling onto the roses, down their stems, and into the soil.

“How are you faring? I spoke with the trees earlier and they explained to me what has happened. You are not hurt, are you?” Roselia’s brow furrowed as she flew over to sit on a leaf in front of me, her crimson dress fanning out around her, making her look like a small rose blossom.

“No. I am a bit shaken, though. What if they have burned down my house?” I said as I began to choke up despite my best efforts. “What if I can never return?”

I buried my face in my hands, unable to hold back my tears, my body shaking as I sobbed.

“Oh, Nina,” Roselia whispered, as I immediately felt her tiny hands on mine, light as a summer breeze.

I began to feel many more small hands, some on my shoulders, others on my back. I looked up and saw dozens of fairies, some still emerging from their homes in a nearby tree, others coming from within the plants where they were resting. All of them gathered around me, their light and warmth almost stronger than the sun’s.

“I wish that things did not have to be this way for you, or for any other witches and wizards,” Lara, an older fairy wearing a royal purple dress with tiny flowers of the same color dotting it said as she came up to float near Roselia. “You mustn’t worry, dear,” she soothed.

“You can still start over here. You can even make a new life for yourself.”

“That is easier said than done,” Nia, a middle-aged fairy wearing a ruffled pink dress piped up from my left shoulder. “No doubt there will be other people out there who have the same attitude as that wretched boy.”

“You may be right, but Nina can’t stop living her life because of one petulant child,” Roselia spoke up once again and the buzz of conversation between the fairies quieted down.

“Nina,” Roselia continued, “you have supplies with you and friends you can reach out to, right?”

I nodded and began wiping the tears off my cheeks and out of the corners of my eyes.

“Then you have nothing to fear,” Roselia said. “No one can hurt you here. Take some time, recover, and we can all help you reach out to your friends when you’re ready.”

“I think I might go and unpack my things,” I sniffled as I pushed my hair away from my face.

“Good idea,” Roselia nodded. “You should take the rest of the day to settle in and relax.”

“I can sense you’re still tired,” Lara said. “Some more rest would do you good.”

“I’ll come and see you tomorrow,” I told Roselia, before turning on my heel and heading back towards my temporary home.

The sun having had barely moved in the sky and I had a feeling that my days were going to begin feeling longer than ever.

### *Arlo POV*

“I don’t know why we have to do this Arlo,” Cedric grumbled as we stepped into the witch’s house. “It’s frustrating enough she wasn’t here the night we came to burn her alive.”

“If it bothers you that much then shut up and help me look for stuff. The sooner we finish, the sooner we can leave,” I snapped.

Cedric huffed and began rifling through the kitchen cabinets.

I shot Cedric a dirty look as soon as he turned his back. I knelt down in front of a nearby bookshelf and began absentmindedly pulling large tomes off a nearby bookshelf one by one and tossing them on the floor.

The witch that refused to make me a love potion some days ago had managed to flee before the townspeople and myself made it to her house and burn her at the stake. Now the mayor had asked my friend Cedric and I to go through her house and take whatever that could be associate with practicing witchcraft to the square to be burned. I figured that if we couldn't burn her, then we could at least destroy her supplies and part of her livelihood. It's a shame we couldn't simply burn down her entire cottage.

"She's got so many jars. We should have brought a cart to take everything away," Cedric remarked as he pulled out an emerald green bottle that had dark liquid sloshing around inside.

I stood up and brushed my trousers off before heading into the bedroom. The room was a decent size and other than the homemade quilt, I didn't see anything of interest. I went back to the kitchen to join Cedric, who was still taking jars of all shapes and sizes out of the cabinets. I was already bored of this search and getting hungry, so I figured I could look for food instead.

As I stepped toward an unopened drawer, my foot bumped against a woven basket that was sticking out from under the kitchen table. I picked up the basket and saw that it contained three cream colored envelopes, all of which had addresses written on the backs of them in elegant cursive.

I grabbed the top envelope, which was unsealed and addressed to a Molly Fletcher, opened it and began reading the letter. My eyes grew wide and my mouth turned up into a smirk. I quickly tore open the remaining envelopes, each one's contents further delighting me. They

were all written to different witches and wizards. Perhaps if I couldn't cause trouble for Nina, I could certainly cause trouble for these other foul creatures.

"You can finish up here if you want," I told Cedric as I headed towards the open door with the basket of letters in hand. "I have everything I need. Meet me at the mayor's house once you're done."

Cedric merely waved to me and I headed off down the street towards the mayor's house, a smirk still plastered on my face. The day suddenly seemed brighter than when I had first entered the witch's house just moments before and I straightened up, walking tall and proud past the butcher's shop. Perhaps I would get a reward for bringing down this many witches and wizards. Or better yet, perhaps my sweet Anne would notice me at last and return my affections.

I rounded the corner and came upon the mayor's house. I smoothed back my hair and cleared my throat before knocking on the bright red door. The brass handle turned and the mayor himself answered, his icy blue eyes narrowing as he looked around before returning his gaze to me.

"Back so soon? And nothing to show for your little trip it seems?" he said and wagged his finger as if he were scolding a child.

"On the contrary, sir, I have found something that I think will be very much to your liking. If I may," I lowered my voice as I continued, "I would rather show you this inside and away from prying eyes."

"You had better not be wasting my time boy," the mayor warned before ushering me inside and leading me to his parlor.

"What is it you want to show me?" the mayor said once he had settled into a cushy crimson chair.

“While looking through the witch’s things, I came across this,” I said and held up the basket. “There are three letters in here, and each one is addressed to a different witch or wizard. It includes their name and where they are located.”

Without missing a beat, the mayor snatched the basket from my hands and began rifling through the letters, his eyes lighting up like a bonfire.

“I cannot believe this!” the mayor exclaimed, waving one of the envelopes in the air. “The address on this letter is the address of the baron of these lands! If I am the one to tell him that there is a nasty little witch in his castle, he will reward me handsomely!”

“What shall you have me do, sir?” I replied stiffly, not missing the fact that the mayor did not mention me in his quest for glory.

“We must deliver these letters to their respective towns and provide our dear baron and all the other mayors with this information at once! These devilish fiends will be brought to their demise in no time!”

### *Nina POV*

A loud pounding on my cottage door jolted me out of a deep slumber. Unnerved, I reached under my bed and grabbed a small knife, brandishing it out in front of me as I slowly got up out of bed and crept closer to the door.

“Who’s there?” I shouted out.

“Nina?” a slightly muffled but recognizable male voice came from the other side of the door. “Nina is that you?”



Not quite believing what I was hearing, I dropped the knife on the kitchen table, raced over and flung the door open to reveal my friend and fellow wizard, Bennett. His brown cloak was pulled close to his body and he had a pack slung over his shoulders. His chestnut hair was tousled and his clothing was disheveled, although at times that was the norm for him. However, his eyes were red around the edges and he seemed panicked, his eyes darting around as he shifted from foot to foot on my doorstep.

“Michael said you were here,” Bennett said, flinging his arms around me.

“Yes, but why are you here?” I said, bringing my arms up to encircle Bennett’s waist.

I was overjoyed to see one of my old friends, but also bewildered. Was Bennett traveling and decided to stop here? He didn’t live that far from the forest surrounding the clearing since he mainly used his magic to protect the forest animals from evil spirits as well as hunters.

“I was chased out of my village!” Bennett exclaimed as he pulled away from me. “I had just come back from helping a porcupine out of a snare and when I got to the outskirts of town the villagers chased me back into the forest. They were screaming about how they didn’t want a wizard in their town. I was lucky enough to lose them before I even got close to the clearing.”

My blood ran cold at Bennett’s words and I felt a shiver run through my body.

“How did they find out?”

“That is what I don’t know,” Bennett said, shaking his head. “Up until now, everything had been fine. But what are you doing here, Nina? Traveling?”

“I was thinking the same thing when I saw you,” I admitted. “Unfortunately, I’m here for almost the same reason as you. I was chased out of my town after a boy that I refused to make a love potion for revealed to everyone that I was a witch. And now here you are, saying that almost the same thing happened to you. I don’t know what to think, Bennett.”

“Nor I,” Bennett scratched his head. “How long have you been here?”

“Barely even two days.”

“This is most unfortunate,” Bennett said. “But on the bright side, at least neither of us are here alone.”

“Is this really the right time to be looking on the bright side?” I sighed in frustration and placed my hands on my hips. “Both our lives have been threatened.”

“True,” Bennett admitted, pulling the straps of his pack further up his shoulders, “but dwelling on negative thoughts will do nothing to improve my current situation or yours. I admit that I would like to get to the bottom of this matter sooner rather than later, but first, I’d like to unpack and rest my legs.”

“Fine,” I let out another sigh and Bennett cracked a grin as I followed him to the closest cottage.

Bennett and I spent the rest of the day catching up and reminiscing on the last time we saw each other, which was almost a year ago. No talk of our current situation was brought up, and I felt myself beginning to relax again.

As it neared evening, Bennett and I decided that we wanted to make mushroom soup, and while he went off to get firewood and kindling, I went off to pick some mushrooms that were growing near the edge of the clearing over by Sarah, Michael, and Ralph.

“Things keep getting stranger by the minute,” Sarah commented, her eyes looking at a spot past my shoulder.

I turned my head and saw a figure running towards the backs of the cottages from the other end of the forest. It was nearly dusk, but there was still enough light left in the day for me to notice a flash of long blonde hair, which meant it couldn’t be Bennett.

“Either my eyes aren’t what they used to be, or that’s Lottie running around up there,” Ralph said, as Michael and I exchanged worried looks.

“I really hope you’re wrong, but I have a feeling you’re not,” I told Ralph before snatching up my basket of mushrooms and hurrying back towards the cottages.

“Lottie, not you too!” I heard Bennett exclaim as I rounded the corner to find a frazzled Lottie—hair wind-blown, bodice not laced up properly, and a pack slung over both shoulders and a satchel slung over her right—and a confused Bennett already engaged in a frantic conversation.

“What’s going on?” I asked Lottie as I gave her a quick hug.

“She’s been chased out of her town just like us!” Bennett exclaimed before Lottie could even open her mouth.

“Lottie, I am so sorry,” I said, patting Lottie’s shoulder sympathetically.

“Thank you, Nina,” Lottie replied, her eyes cast down. “I feel bad for you and Bennett as well.”

“How did we all manage to wind up in this situation?” Bennett began scratching the side of his head and chewed his lip. “You were here first Nina,” Bennett said. “Is there anything you can think of that may have caused this?”

“Not really,” I said. “I thought the boy and the townspeople were only after me, and I didn’t have time to look around because it was late at night when I left.”

“What about you, Lottie?” Bennett turned to look at the young girl who was still struggling to catch her breath.

“I can’t say I noticed anything out of the ordinary,” Lottie began and then her eyes grew wide. “But I did hear someone saying that an urgent message or a letter of some sort had come into town earlier in the day from Nina’s town and everyone was wondering what it was about.”

At the word letter, I felt my heart drop into my stomach. I had suddenly remembered something that I had so foolishly forgotten.

“I know what happened,” I said, my voice barely above a whisper. “They must have found my letters.”

“Letters?” Bennett said, he and Lottie looking at me in confusion.

“The day before I came to the clearing, I had been writing letters to the both of you and Molly, but I never got to send them. I ended up leaving them behind, but they already had your names and addresses on them.”

I fell to the ground, my hands coming up to cover my face. I couldn’t even look at my friends. They had been chased out of their homes and had their lives ruined because of me. How could I have been so careless?

“I am so sorry,” I whispered through my fingers, feeling tears forming in my eyes once again. “I am so sorry that all of this has happened. I’ve ruined everything.”

“I think I can speak for both of us when I say that we don’t blame you, Nina.” I felt Lottie kneel down beside me and begin stroking my hair. “It was unfortunate, but it was an accident. I just hope we were the only ones.”

“You were,” I reassured her, reaching out to grasp her free hand. “It was only you three.”

“Speaking of which, I wonder when Molly will show up,” Bennett said. “I’m sure the news has made it to her by now.”

“If that is the case, then I hope she gets here safely,” Lottie said. “Come on,” she whispered to me. “I can make us all some tea if you help me unpack. I brought some leaves along with me.”

I silently nodded my head, and keeping a firm grip on Lottie's hand, raised myself back up to a standing position. Bennett moved to my left side and placed his arm around my shoulders and together the three of us walked towards the third closest cottage.

"Nina? Nina did you hear anything I just said?" Lottie shouted, snapping me out of my thoughts.

"Oh, sorry Lottie. What were you saying?"

I blushed as Lottie rolled her eyes and shifted the straw hat that she had borrowed from Bennett further up her head.

"I was asking you if you minded if I put carrots in the stew," Lottie said. "I'm surprised you even heard me when I was shouting at you. You've been lost in your thoughts all day."

"Sorry, carrots are fine with me," I sighed as I moved to kneel next to Lottie who was already grasping onto the stem of one carrot. "I didn't sleep well last night. This whole situation has got me feeling out of sorts."

Bennett and I never ended up making the mushroom soup last night and this morning Lottie had decided that we could all use something hearty like stew to lift our spirits. She also said that she didn't want the mushrooms and firewood that Bennett and I had gathered to go to waste.

"You still feel bad about what happened, don't you?" Lottie grunted as she tugged the carrot out of the ground, spraying bits of dirt onto our skirts.

"How could I not? My mistake not only ruined my life, but yours and Bennett's as well."

“We already said we don’t blame you for what happened,” Lottie said, continuing to scoot down the row of carrots. “Besides, none of us can change what happened.”

“You sound like Roselia,” I huffed, uprooting another carrot as I thought about a similar conversation that I had had with the fairy queen last night when I couldn’t sleep. “She told me something similar.”

“Then maybe you should take what we’re saying to heart and stop beating yourself up,” Lottie raised her eyebrows at me as I shrugged.

Lottie picked up the wicker basket by her feet that was now filled to the brim with vegetables and moved to stand next to me. I slowly stood up and added the few carrots I had harvested into the basket, still not wanting to meet Lottie’s eyes.

“You, me, Bennett, we can all figure out a solution to this,” Lottie spoke softly, her free hand coming to rest on my left shoulder. “It may not be an easy solution, but we can figure something out. This situation only becomes hopeless if we lose hope.”

I finally looked up at Lottie, and was surprised to see a wide, toothy smile spreading across her face. Her sky-blue eyes shining even under the brim of her hat.

“Come on,” Lottie began walking back towards our cottages, where I could already see smoke rising from Bennett’s chimney. “I bet having some good food in you will lift your spirits a bit.”

I was out in the garden a few days later tending to some ginseng, the sun warming my back and shoulders like a blanket. It had been a few days since Lottie and Bennett had shown up

and everything seemed peaceful. Our only concern was that Molly had yet to arrive at the clearing. Her letter was the last one I had written before I had fled. Both Lottie and Bennett had suggested that maybe the letter had gotten lost, or perhaps Molly had gone into hiding elsewhere. I tried to believe their theories, but I still couldn't help feeling uneasy.

I was snapped out of my thoughts when I heard a rustling coming from some nearby bushes. I turned and watched a redheaded young woman that I did not recognize emerge from the bushes, her eyes frantically darting left and right. Her eyes met mine and without missing a beat, she hiked up her dress and rushed over to me.

"Excuse me," she began, her eyes still wandering this way and that. "Do you know someone named Nina? I'm supposed to tell her that Molly sent me, and—"

"I am Nina," I put up my hand to stop her, fixing her with a serious look. "What do you know about Molly? Is she all right?"

"No," the girl shook her head. "She's being held hostage in Baron Adley's castle. Molly said you were her most trusted friend and that if anyone could free her it was you."

"Who are you?" I had never seen this woman before in my life, and at this point I was worried this might be a trap.

"My name is Beatrice."

My eyes grew wide as I stared back at the woman in disbelief. Had I heard her correctly?

"Beatrice? As in Baron Adley's daughter?"

"Yes," the woman nodded.

"Molly has mentioned you in some of her letters," I said. "But how did you get here? This forest is enchanted, and only witches and wizards are able to pass through safely."

The woman pulled off her necklace and handed it to me. It was a simple chain with a metal oak leaf charm hanging from it.

“Molly charmed this necklace for me so that I could get through the forest,” Beatrice explained as I examined the piece.

“She took a great risk sending you here,” I said, handing the necklace back to Beatrice.

“She didn’t send me. I offered to go.”

“Why? At this point, things between you ‘normal’ folks and us witches and wizards are more problematic than ever before.”

Before Bennett, Lottie, and I had even come to the clearing, the stories coming in from neighboring towns about witches and wizards being kidnapped or executed had become more and more frequent. Sometimes I would hear horrible tales of witches and wizards getting tortured and executed twice a week. Not to mention Beatrice’s father Baron Adley had made it his mission to exterminate as many of us as possible.

“Would you rather have me do nothing and let Molly die?” Beatrice replied, placing her hands on her hips

“Of course not,” I quipped. “I’m grateful that you’ve come.”

“You’re the one whose letters they found, aren’t they?” Beatrice said, and I felt my cheeks flush in embarrassment.

“Yes,” I replied, my voice falling to a whisper.

“Don’t look so down, Nina,” Beatrice consoled me, lightly lifting my chin with her finger. “Molly sent me here so that you could save her.”

“Are there others here with you?” she continued, changing the subject. “When I overheard my father talking about the letters, he mentioned that more than one was found.”



“There’s two others here besides me,” I said. “A wizard named Bennett and a witch named Lottie.”

“I’ve heard those names before from talking with Molly,” Beatrice nodded.

“Why don’t you come with me and I can introduce you to them,” I offered. “I’m sure they’ll want to hear your story as well.”

I began walking back towards the cottages and Beatrice fell into step beside me. As we approached the cottages, Lottie rushed out of her front door, her eyes wide.

“I saw you walking up,” she explained as she headed over to us. “Nina, who is this?” Lottie asked, nodding in Beatrice’s direction. “Is she a friend of yours?”

“I’m Beatrice,” Beatrice replied, introducing herself before I had the chance to say anything. “My father Baron Adley was sent Nina’s letter that was meant for Molly. He’s locked Molly up inside his castle, and she sent me to get Nina to help free her.”

“What?!” Lottie exclaimed and Beatrice and I shushed her in unison.

“Is something the matter?”

Bennett emerged from his cottage yawning and rubbing his eyes. As he turned to look in our direction, he shook his head in disbelief and reached up to rub his eyes again when he saw Beatrice.

“What on earth is happening?” Bennett asked me as he walked over to stand next to Lottie, confusion evident in his voice.

“Molly’s been kidnapped! And she sent Beatrice to get Nina to help free her! Oh, this is horrible!” Lottie exclaimed in a rush.

“Calm down Lottie,” Bennett said before turning to Beatrice.

“Would you like to come inside? We can all discuss this over tea,” Bennett said, motioning for all of us to follow him back inside his cottage.

“That would be wonderful, thank you,” Beatrice replied, giving Bennett a small smile.

“How exactly did you and Molly meet?” I asked Beatrice as we headed inside. Bennett immediately went over to stoke the small fire in his fireplace.

“Molly has been teaching me how to bake ever since she started working for my father,” Beatrice explained. “I first ran into her in the garden when she was out picking some fruits and vegetables for supper. I got to talking to her, and she had so many amazing stories to tell me. I would always go into the kitchens and sit with her while she worked, and eventually I started helping her.”

“But how did you find out she was a witch?” Lottie asked as she brought mugs with tea leaves already in them to the table and then sat down beside me.

“Honestly, I found out by accident,” Beatrice admitted. “I went into the kitchen to visit Molly one day and found that all the spoons were stirring themselves inside the pots but there was no one to be found except Molly and she was all the way in the pantry. I was a little taken aback at first,” Beatrice giggled, “but I didn’t see any reason to make a big fuss about it. She was scared that I was going to tell my father about her, but I swore I wouldn’t. She had always been so kind to me.”

“How long has Molly been locked up?” Bennett asked, his eyes trained on the kettle that he had hung over the fire.

“For about a day and a half,” Beatrice said, and I grimaced. “I came as quickly as I could today because they’re making preparations for her execution.”

“NO!” I exclaimed. Bennett’s head snapped up and Lottie put her hands over her mouth and shuddered.

“When is it going to happen?” Bennett’s eyes looked like they had a storm brewing inside them.

“From what I heard it seemed like the execution would be taking place about two days from now.”

I pushed my chair away from the table and turned towards the door. I rushed outside and headed towards my cottage. Once inside, I headed straight towards my satchel and grabbed it off the back of one of my kitchen chairs before racing back over to Bennett’s.

“What are you doing?” Bennett walked over to the table with the kettle and began pouring water into the mugs.

“I’m going to write letters to all the witches and wizards that I know,” I explained as I started pulling sheets of paper and some of my quills and ink out my pack. “Hopefully some of the ones that live nearby will come out and help me rescue Molly. I might write to some of my friends from town as well.”

“Why do you say ‘I’ as if you are the only one who wants to help?” Bennett scratched his beard and stared at me as I let out a long sigh.

“I don’t want to put any of you in more danger than I already have,” I replied firmly and sat back down.

“Are you forgetting that Molly is our friend too?” Lottie said and snatched a piece of paper and a quill from the center of the table. “We’re not going to let you do this alone, Nina.”

“You also won’t know how to get into the castle without my help,” Beatrice added. “I think I may also know a few people I can write to.”

“I’ll go get some more ink,” Bennett set the kettle down by the fire and headed off towards his bedroom.

“We’ll have to come up with a plan,” I said.

“Certainly,” Bennett replied and placed a bottle of ink next to the paper. “I’m glad you’re saying ‘we’ now instead of ‘I’.”

### *Arlo POV*

I was on my way to the pub when I felt a hand grip my shoulder and whip me around. I was surprised to see Anne, the girl I had been attempting to woo but to no avail. I hoped that my luck was finally turning, but was surprised to see a frown on her face, her eyes boring into me like daggers.

“What have you done to Nina?” she said as she pushed me into a nearby ally and up against the side of the baker’s shop. “I know you were the one that caused the raid on her home and not the bloody mayor.”

“I-I don’t know who—” I began, but was cut off when she smacked my face, my left cheek instantly beginning to sting.

“Do you have any idea what you’ve done?” Anne shouted at me. “Nina was a good person! She helped so many people here recover from their illnesses. She’s the reason my mother is still alive and didn’t succumb to her fever last winter. I can’t imagine what she could have done to you to make you chase her out of her own home!”

I gulped, a lump forming in my throat. I couldn't tell Anne that the reason I drove the witch, who I now knew was named Nina, out of her home because she had refused to make a love potion for me. A love potion which I had intended to use on Anne.

"My father says there's word that other witches and wizards have been driven out of other nearby towns due to letters that were found here. There was even a witch discovered to be living in the baron's castle," Anne said, and I felt beads of sweat begin to run down my back.

"They're going to execute her tomorrow." Tears were beginning to form at the corners of Anne's eyes as she finally let go of my shoulder and turned on her heel.

"I hope you're happy that you've ruined so many lives."

Once Anne was out of sight, I let out a sigh and sunk down against the wall until I was sitting on the ground, the shadows of the buildings around me growing longer as the sun set. I was realizing that I had made a horrible mistake. What was worse is that I was one of the last ones to figure it out. I had noticed lately that some people around town had been throwing me dirty looks, and now with Anne's accusations thrown into the mix, I was finally beginning to understand the gravity of what I had done. Someone was going to die, and it was because of me.

I stood up and headed back down the street away from the pub. I had to try and do something to fix this.

"You all remember the plan, right?" I addressed Bennett, Lottie, Beatrice, Roselia, the fairies, and the flock of about fifty sparrows that sat scattered across Michael, Ralph, and Sarah's branches.

I finished securing my belt and sheath that carried my dagger around my waist. I was hoping I wouldn't actually have to use the blade.

At the edge of the forest the deer, rabbits, and foxes all gathered together, their eyes fixed on me attentively.

"I lead the sparrows and the rabbits to create a diversion," Bennett replied, directing his gaze up towards the sparrows, some of them chirping in response. "That should give you and Beatrice enough time to get into the castle and find Molly."

"And while Bennett is creating the diversion, Roselia and I will rally our forces outside the castle," Lottie adds.

"If anyone comes," I cautioned them.

All of us had written letters to our friends to inform them of our situation and the birds and fairies had delivered them. Even though Roselia told me the deliveries had been successful, I was afraid many people would still decide not to come.

"They will come, Nina," Beatrice reassured me, giving me a small smile. "I know it."

I felt myself returning Beatrice's smile and out of the corner of my eye I saw Roselia shoot me a knowing look.

"We don't have much time so we need to head out right away," I said and everyone nodded.

"Good luck to all of you," Michael said.

"And bring Molly home safely," Sarah added. Ralph simply winked at me and gently waved one of his branches that didn't have sparrows sitting on it.

Lottie tightened the straps of the pack she had slung over her shoulder, and Bennett gripped his staff tightly in his right hand. I took a deep breath and quickly turned on my heel, racing into the forest, the animals, fairies, and my friends all following close behind me.

About an hour later we were approaching the castle, its steep walls glowing a soft yellow in the early morning sunshine. Our group slowed as we neared the edge of the forest, and Lottie, Roselia, and Bennett moved to stand beside Beatrice and I. The faint rumble of a crowd could be heard to our right.

“The courtyard where the execution is set to take place is just beyond that hill,” Beatrice whispered, pointing to the right. “The trees still go up most of the hill, so you should be able to look down and see if anyone’s come to help us without being noticed.”

Lottie nodded silently, and her and Roselia retreated a little further back into the forest before making their way towards the top of the hill.

“Nervous?” Beatrice asked me, her eyes staring straight ahead at the castle, almost as if she was boring a hole right through the walls.

“Definitely,” I admitted, following her gaze to a window that was about two stories off the ground. “Is Molly up there?”

“She should be,” Beatrice said. “I doubt they would have moved her yet. How are your climbing skills?”

“Not too bad. I’ve climbed a lot of trees in my spare time,” I replied, a smirk coming onto my face for the very first time that day. I turned to look at Beatrice, my eyebrows raised playfully. “And yourself?”

“Pretty good,” Beatrice said, grinning. “We can race each other to the top.”

“They’ve come!” Lottie exclaimed as quietly as she could. She ran up to us, Roselia following along next to her. “The other witches and wizards, and some of our other friends and villagers. Even your friend Margaret is here Nina!”

“I told you they would be here,” Beatrice remarked, and Roselia nodded.

“We can go and alert them as soon as you two head into the castle,” Roselia said.

“Then it’s time for us to put our plan into action,” I said, motioning with my right hand for Bennett to step forward.

“Are you all ready?” Bennett said to the animals, all of whom either nodded, chirped, or pawed the ground in response.

“All right then, birds and rabbits into the castle right...now!”

Bennett pointed forward and the sparrows and rabbits rushed forward. Some raced towards the open window and others scattered across the grounds, the sound of confused guards quickly reaching our ears. The deer waited a few more seconds before running off across the grounds as well, with the foxes following close behind.

“We should go,” Beatrice said to me, tugging me forward as we broke into a run.

Beatrice and I rushed past the last trees and through a line of small bushes that surrounded part of the castle yard. Off to the left, I saw a guard wildly swinging at a group of the sparrows with his sword, but they continued to dodge just out of range every single time. Another couple of other sparrows rapidly pecked at his shins and helmet. To my right, I saw parts of the crowd gathered around a large wooden pyre. My eyes stayed fixed on the harrowing sight so long that I almost ran into the rough walls of the castle.

I looked over at Beatrice and watched her feel along the wall until she found a stone that stuck out just enough that she could grab onto it. I did the same until I found a stone that was a



little to the right of the rectangular window. Beatrice glanced over at me and I nodded at her before the two of us set to scaling the wall, the cool edges of the stone scraping against the soft flesh of my palms. My need to get to Molly pushed me to climb the wall so quickly that even a spider would have been in awe.

Within minutes the two of us had reached the window. Beatrice hoisted herself up onto the sill and inside and then pulled me up and into the castle. My feet hit the stone floor and looked down a long hallway that was still illuminated by torches. Thankfully there were no guards or anyone in sight.

“This way,” Beatrice called out, already beginning to make her way down the hallway towards a small flight of stairs.

Our footsteps echoed through the hallway and as we reached the top of the steps, I gasped as we came face to face with two guards standing in front of a large wooden door. Both of the guards seemed rather taken aback at our sudden appearance, their eyes going wide.

“Miss Beatrice,” said the guard on the left, who was a bit shorter, clearly trying to hide his confusion. “I was not expecting to see you here today. I thought you would not be back for another week.”

“Who is that with you?” The second guard seemed a bit more skeptical than the first. His eyes met mine and I stared at him, resisting the urge to glare.

“She is one of my new maids,” Beatrice replied coolly. “I was sent here by my father to retrieve the witch and bring her down to the courtyard. Now, please unlock the door for me so that I may retrieve the witch.”

“But your father said he wanted to bring her down himself,” the second guard said, his eyes narrowing even more.

“Are you questioning my authority?” Beatrice asked the guards, drawing herself to stand a few inches taller. “I was not asking you to unlock the door, I was telling you.”

“As you wish, Miss Beatrice,” the first guard replied immediately, reaching for a set of keys that was hanging from his belt.

A shout from somewhere outside pierced the air as the guard was unlocking the door.

“What was that?” the guard said as he stepped back to let Beatrice into what I could now see was a small cell.

“Probably just an enthusiastic villager,” Beatrice replied casually. “You know how excited they get for these types of things.”

Looking past the two guards I saw Molly and my heart began beating faster in my chest. She looked all right except her strawberry blonde hair was all mussed, her clothes were wrinkled, and I could see bags under her eyes as Beatrice led her out of the cell, her hands bound together with rope.

Molly looked up at me and her face seemed to brighten almost immediately. I wanted to cut her free right then but restrained myself as we slowly turned away from the guards and began walking back down the stairs.

Once the three of us were out of sight from the guards, I pulled my dagger out its sheath and cut the ropes binding Molly’s hands together. I flung my arms around her, squeezing her to me.

“I knew you two would come for me,” Molly whispered as I gently smoothed down her hair.

“You’re not free just yet,” Beatrice reminded us, “We still have to climb back down to safety.”

I released Molly, sheathed my dagger, and we raced back down the hallway towards the window.

“I’ll go first and you two can follow,” Beatrice said, quickly swinging her legs out the window, and soon her torso and head disappeared from view.

I motioned for Molly to go ahead and once I saw that she had made her way to a spot a few feet below the window, I headed down after her.

I breathed a sigh of relief once my feet touched the ground. Molly looked over at Beatrice and I as she attempted to smooth out her wrinkled skirt.

“I apologize for my appearance,” she said as we began running towards the safety of the forest. “I haven’t been outside for quite some time.”

“I think that’s the least of our worries at—” I started to say but was interrupted by a bellowing shout that came from the edge of a nearby garden.

“Halt! I command you to stop at once!”

Molly and I continued to run, but I slowed my pace when I realized that Beatrice had stopped and was staring at a burly man who had a thick brown moustache and was wearing a long black tunic that was lined with white fur. He was flanked on either side by two guards, and the three of them glared down at us from their spot a little further up the hill.

“Beatrice?” the burly man said, sounded shocked and angry. “What on earth are you doing?”

I glanced over at Beatrice and saw she was frowning, her mouth drawn in a taut line.

“That’s the baron,” Molly leaned over and whispered to me, her eyes wide with fear.

From our position I couldn’t see much of the courtyard, but I could still hear the sound of the sparrows flying around nearby.

The guards drew their swords and I immediately let out a long shrill whistle. As the whistle pierced the air, a group of sparrows flew in from atop the castle and down from the trees, spiraling directly towards the three men.

“Guards! Don’t let them get away!” the baron bellowed as we turned and ran up towards the top of the next hill where I could hear another whistle that I knew to be from Bennett.

“The guards are starting to come out from the courtyard!” Bennett called to us as we approached him and a couple of deer that had stayed behind.

Bennett motioned for us to look down the hill, and I saw a group of the castle’s armed guards making their way up the hill towards us. I reached for my dagger and was about to draw it when I heard a conch blow from the other end of the courtyard.

I squinted and saw Lottie with the hood of her cloak thrown back, the conch shell still raised to her lips defiantly. I was struck with disbelief as nearly half the crowd gathered in the courtyard flung back their own cloaks to reveal all sorts of white flowers pinned to their breasts. We had told our allies to wear white flowers so that we could pick them out in the crowd.

I watched as the fairies flew out from behind Lottie, across the courtyard, and towards the guards to leading the initial charge. With a cry from someone in the crowd, the people with the white flowers rushed forward. Some of them carried swords while others carried walking sticks similar to Bennett’s, and many even carried broomsticks and pans.

I locked eyes with Beatrice and before I could say anything, she let out a piercing cry of her own and rushed down the hill towards the initial group of guards, many of whom were already preoccupied with the fairies.

Bennett, Molly, and I raced down the hill after Beatrice, with the deer following alongside Bennett. Molly waved her hands over the ground and motioned in the direction of the

guards. Grass and flowers began rapidly sprouting out of the earth and snaking their way up the guard's legs.

"Take them out at once!" a voice came from just inside the castle's entrance, and soon after the baron came into view riding a horse. Another group of guards followed him, their weapons drawn.

From beside me I heard Bennett let out another long whistle, this one even more high-pitched than the first. I heard the cries of falcons calling out in response, their shadows stretching across the crowd.

"Nina!" Margaret called, as she rushed over to me, elbowing a man in the gut as he lunged for her, a long carving knife held in her left hand.

I glanced over Margaret's shoulder and saw Lottie following close behind her. I winced as I saw flames burst out of Lottie's hands and onto the arm of a guard that was dragging away a young woman by her hair. The guard dropped the girl's hair and she scrambled away while he screamed in pain and raced away from the scene.

"I'm so glad you're all right," I told Margaret, keeping my eyes fixed on the ground beneath the baron's horse as he galloped towards Beatrice, who had moved a few feet from our group to help the sparrows take down a guard who had cornered an older man with a gray beard.

I furrowed my brows and watched as the earth under the horse's hooves began to split and crack. The horse reared, nearly throwing the baron to the ground.

"I could say the same about you," Margaret grunted, as she locked her knife with the sword of another guard.

I waved my hand and a nearby stone whizzed through the air, knocking the guard in the shoulder. Margaret finished him off with a swift kick to his left knee.

“Stop!”

A voice rang out above the shouts, clanging of swords, and screeches of birds. I whipped my head around and saw Arlo, his chest heaving and a sword in his right hand. He ran directly towards Margaret and I, and Margaret stepped in front of me protectively.

“Don’t you dare come any closer, you scoundrel,” Margaret glared at Arlo as he approached, her knife held out in front of her menacingly.

I had never seen Margaret get angry or aggressive. I was almost more terrified of her than the crowd of angry villagers around us.

I saw Beatrice back up and I reached for her hand. I felt relief surge through me when I felt her squeeze my hand back. Bennett moved so his back was lightly brushing against my shoulder and Lottie grabbed Molly’s hand and pulled her so she was sandwiched between Bennett and I. The rest of our comrades and the fairies moved to form a tight ring around us. I looked out upon the sea of people that surrounded us. Some of them were friends who had come to our aid, while others were enemies that still held their weapons out in front of them menacingly.

I turned to look at Beatrice again and noticed that she was staring at the baron. His frown bore down on our little group like a rainstorm.

“May I say something?” Arlo lowered his sword and looked past Margaret’s shoulder towards me. “Please?”

I removed my hand from Beatrice’s grasp and cautiously stepped forward. Roselia flew down to float alongside me as I stopped to stand just behind Margaret. I would give this boy a chance, but I was not about to let my guard down just yet.

“You have already ruined my life and the lives of countless others,” I said firmly, attempting to maintain my composure. “What more could you possibly have to say to me, or to any of us?”

“That I realize now that I was wrong,” Arlo replied, looking me square in the eye. “I was wrong to treat you the way I did, about deciding that I had the right to ruin the lives of people who have done me no harm, and so many other things.”

Margaret looked back at me, her eyes wide, before turning back to continue listening to Arlo.

“This will not make up for the deeds that have already been done,” Arlo continued. “But I wanted to promise you that I see the error of my ways. I don’t want to ruin anyone else’s life. I would rather change my own.”

“You realize that you have to mean what you’re saying, right?” I said and stepped towards Arlo. “These can’t be empty words.”

“I promise you they won’t be,” Arlo said as we came face to face.

I stuck out my right hand and extended it towards Arlo, my eyes never leaving his as I tried to ignore the sweat running down my back.

Arlo slowly extended his own hand and shook mine, giving me a small smile as murmurs went through the crowd around us. I could only assume that some were negative and hope some were positive.

“This is outrageous!” the baron roared. “These witches and their evil ways must be stopped at once!”

“It isn’t evil father!” Beatrice shouted out even louder than the baron. “This fighting is what is what is evil. This fighting is what must be stopped.”

I looked at Margaret and she dropped her knife on the grass in front of her.

More whispers went through the crowd and slowly, the majority of the people lowered their weapons and moved to stand beside Arlo and I. Some strode over confidently, while others slowly moved forward once they saw their comrades moving. There was a small group that moved closer to the baron, and I noticed others beginning to completely disperse all around us.

“I think it’s time we all went back home,” I said to Arlo, who nodded in reply.

“I agree.”

“So this is your home,” Beatrice said as she stepped through the doorway of my cottage.

I was finally home for the first time after this whole ordeal and I wished that everything looked just the way I left it. Instead, the place looked like it had been ransacked. There were cabinets and drawers hanging open, their contents broken or missing, and my kitchen chairs were turned over on their sides. While it was kind of Arlo to offer to help me tidy it up, I wasn’t sure if I wanted him around my home just yet. I might wait and ask him for help with my garden.

“Please try and ignore the mess,” I felt my face turning red as I hurried over to set the overturned chairs back up. “I haven’t been able to clean.”

“Nina,” Beatrice said, placing one hand on my shoulder. “It’s fine.”

I turned to look at Beatrice and gave her a small smile, which she returned with an even brighter smile of her own. I felt my heart fluttering in my chest and I boldly leaned forward, my eyes trained on Beatrice’s lips. Before I could even get close to her, I was startled by a knock at the door.



“I figured you might need some help tidying up.”

I turned to see Margaret and her two children. Her son was holding cleaning cloths and her daughter was holding a bouquet of chrysanthemums, while Margaret carried a bucket of water.

“We would love some help,” Beatrice answered for me before I could even open my mouth, giving me a wink as she went to grab the bucket from Margaret’s hands. “Thank you.”

Margaret smiled at me and gently pushed her daughter towards me. The little girl stepped forward, her cheeks a light pink as she handed me the bouquet of soft white flowers.

“These are for you,” she whispered, looking off to the side.

“Thank you very much,” I replied, gently patting her on the head. “They’re beautiful. Would you like to help me find a place to put them?”

The girl looked up at me, her blue eyes shining. I reach my hand out and she grasped it in her own little one, and together we headed into the kitchen.

“You should write a letter to Molly later,” Beatrice called after me. “Let her know all is well and that we got home safely.”

You may be wondering, dear reader, what happened after this? Did things really change for the better for us witches and wizards? And I will tell you that in some ways they did, and in some ways, they did not. Many people became more accepting of us, and we were all able to live relatively normal lives. We did not feel the need to hide our identities from the masses as we did before, but there were still people who disapproved of us. These people would occasionally heckle us or say nasty things, but usually nothing beyond that. In some ways, that was the best possible outcome. People will have their prejudices and their own ideas, and you can’t change everyone’s minds.

But, dear reader, what mattered to us is that we were all no longer alone anymore. We had friends, neighbors, families, children, and us witches and wizards still had each other.

Love, Letters, and Spells

by

Gina Klaff

FADE IN

INT. NINA'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

We see NINA, a young woman in her early 20s with long black hair and wearing a dark blue dress with a white blouse. She is sitting at a small kitchen table writing a letter.

NINA (V.O.)  
My dearest Molly,

Her quill moves across the paper and some stray hairs fall to the side of her face.

NINA (V.O.)  
I am sorry it's been so long since our last correspondence. I would have written sooner, but I was caught up in creating just the right charm for exterminating a rather pesky poltergeist that has been disturbing the Silvermans for quite some time now. The foul creature nearly destroyed Eliza's teddy bear in the process! Thankfully, it has been dealt with and now the Silvermans can finally get a good night's rest.

Off to the side of the kitchen is a small living area. There is a large cauldron sitting in the fireplace. In between the front door and the fireplace there is a bookcase filled with large tomes of all different colors. Some have words on the spines while others only have symbols.

NINA (V.O.)  
Thank you for belladonna seeds you sent me with your last letter! They have been very helpful in curing the recent coughing fits that have been plaguing the local children. I promise to send you some of my prized garlic in exchange. It seems as if you always know just what to send me. Then again, even though you are my mentor you are still my dear friend.

On the other side of the fireplace is an armchair that has an indent in the cushion and some worn patches on the arms. There is a small table to the left of the armchair. Atop the table is a blue vase with some wildflowers in it.

To the right of Nina, various pots and pans line the wall all the way to the kitchen cabinets. The sink is filled with small vases and jars and a bread knife that still has some jam on it. Above the sink there is a square window and there is another small vase of wildflowers sitting on the sill.

NINA (V.O.)

Other than that, things have been quiet for me. Everything is running as smooth as can be, but I do have a rather important question for you. Do you use any sort of flavoring in the buttercream icing for the baron's strawberry cake? Strawberry, raspberry, lemon? I must know.

Love,

Nina

A GRUNT comes from NINA'S doorway, and she looks up to see ARLO, a young man of about seventeen. He's wearing black trousers and a grey tunic, and he has some stubble on his chin.

Nina nods at Arlo as he walks into her house.

ARLO

I want you to make me a love potion. There is a girl who has been unreceptive to my advances, and normally I would not take this so seriously, but she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen, and I'm intent on marrying her.

Nina frowns and shakes her head.

NINA

Unfortunately, I can't do as you wish. Love potions are immoral, and are essentially liquid lies.

ARLO

Then direct me to someone who will make me one.

NINA

I don't know of any witch or wizard who would make you what you ask for. That sort of potion is not highly

thought of.

Arlo stomps toward Nina, his fists clenched.

ARLO

Listen here, witch. I don't expect you to know what love feels like, but that doesn't mean that exempts you from helping me win the hand of this girl. Now, I demand that you do as I wish.

Nina pushes her chair back from the table and stands up. She clutches her quill firmly in her fist.

NINA

I suggest that you leave while you can. I may not make love potions, but that does not mean I am above making other sorts of potions and spells. And the ones I'm imagining will do nothing to help you.

Arlo's eyes widen and he gives Nina a withering glare. He turns on his heel and walks out of the cottage. Arlo slams the door behind him, causing the flames on the nearby candles to shudder.

Nina sits back down and SIGHS. She slips the letter she had been writing into an envelope, addresses and seals it, and places it into a basket near her feet.

INT. NINA'S HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nina puts a bowl into a cupboard and begins blowing out some nearby candles.

A frantic KNOCKING comes from the door. A puzzled look crosses Nina's face and she tightens her robe around her before hurrying over to answer the door.

Nina opens the door, her eyes widening when she sees her friend MARGARET, a woman in her late 20s, standing outside. MARGARET is still dressed in her dress and apron, both of which are covered in flour. Her brown hair is a bit mussed and she is struggling to catch her breath.

NINA

(motioning for Margaret to come in)  
Is something the matter, Margaret?

MARGARET

Something has gone horribly wrong,  
Nina. I came as quickly as I could to  
warn you.

NINA

Warn me?

MARGARET

Arlo has told the entire town that you  
are a nasty witch who threatened to  
curse him! They are plan to arrest you  
and burn you at the stake! You must  
leave at once! A mob is already on  
their way here!

Margaret tugs at Nina's hands and brings her over to a hook  
near the front door, from which hangs a well-worn satchel and  
an emerald cloak.

Margaret thrusts the cloak into Nina's arms before grabbing  
the satchel and running into the kitchen. She starts  
rummaging through the cabinets and pulling out various jars  
full of liquids and herbs and stuffing them into the satchel.  
She grabs a loaf of bread, wraps it in a cloth and shoves it  
inside the bag.

INT. NINA'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nina rushes into her bedroom and gathers up a handful of  
clothes, an apron, and a blanket. She sweeps her gaze over  
the little room one last time before heading back out into  
the hallway, almost running into Margaret.

INT. NINA'S HOME, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Margaret hands Nina the now bulky satchel and gently pats her  
hand.

Nina stuff some of her clothes and her apron into the satchel  
and throws everything else over her shoulders.

MARGARET

I put a bit of my raspberry jam in  
there for you. I don't know where  
you're going, but this can be like a  
little comfort from home.

NINA

Thank you. Now, we must both go.  
Heaven only know what will happen if

anyone finds you here.

INT. NINA'S HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nina and Margaret walk back out into the kitchen. Nina blows out the last couple of candles on the kitchen table, grasps Margaret's hand, and they walk out the front door together.

EXT. NINA'S HOME - NIGHT

MARGARET

Be careful.

Margaret flips the cowl of her cloak up and turns to leave.

The sound of the mob can be heard in the background as Nina flips up the cowl of her own cloak and takes off into the night.

The moon is full and it illuminates a pathway that Nina follows into the forest.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Nina parts the branches of some trees and steps into a clearing that has small brick cottages scattered throughout it. The grass in the clearing is long and there are various plants sprouting up and around the cottages.

Nina takes a few steps towards the nearest cottage and sits down in the grass before she can reach the front steps. She sets her satchel and her things on the ground and looks up to see the sun's rays stretching across the sky, tears slowly falling from her eyes.

A face morphs out of a nearby oak tree, his eyes softening when he sees Nina sitting in the grass. He lowers one of his branches to rest on Nina's shoulder.

OAK TREE

It is never a joyful thing to see any  
of you come back here. I know it's  
selfish of me to say this, but I've  
missed you Nina.

NINA

I've missed you too, Michael

Nina walks over to Michael (Oak Tree) and gives him a small



smile and places her hand on one of his branches.

A face morphs into view on the trunk of a nearby SYCAMORE TREE, his eyes widening when he sees Nina.

SYCAMORE TREE

Well, what about me? You can't just say you miss Michael and then not tell me that you miss me too!

Nina and Michael exchange a grin. Nina runs over and throws her arms around the sycamore tree's trunk, his eyes widening in surprise

NINA

Of course I've missed you, Ralph!  
You're one of my oldest and dearest friends.

Ralph's (Sycamore Tree) branches move to encircle Nina in a hug.

MICHAEL

What brings you to the clearing, Nina?

Nina moves away from Ralph so she's standing in between the two trees.

NINA

A young man in my town told everyone that I was a witch, and that I had threatened to curse him. They were going to burn me at the stake had my friend Margaret not come to warn me.

RALPH

What a nasty devil! Why would he make up such lies?

NINA

Yesterday he came to me and asked me to make him a love potion. When I refused he became angry and demanded that I make him one. I became rather harsh with him in order to scare him off, and I'm assuming that he told the other townspeople everything so that they'd help him take revenge on me.

APPLE TREE

How awful! You poor dear! For you to

arrive here at this hour, you must have traveled without any rest.

NINA

I didn't have much of a choice, Sarah. Admittedly, I was also too afraid to stop anywhere. I didn't know if anyone would be following me.

SARAH (APPLE TREE)

You must rest at once. I do not want you fainting or getting sick.

Sarah nudges Nina's back with her branches and coaxes her into standing.

NINA

(yawning)

I should talk with Roselia first. She'll want to know I'm here.

MICHAEL

Talking to Roselia can wait. I'm sure she'll understand why you waited to see her.

NINA

Well, if she comes by, please tell her I didn't forget about her.

RALPH

We will. Now, go.

Sarah gives Nina a final nudge and Ralph and Michael both give her small smiles.

Nina picks up her satchel and other belongings and heads back towards the cottage. She walks up the front steps, pushes the door open, and steps inside.

INT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE - DAY

The sunlight filtering in through the windows illuminates the dust floating through the air.

Nina lays her belongings on the kitchen table and undoes the clasp on her cloak. She moves to hang her cloak over a kitchen chair and her eyes widen when she looks down and sees that she is still in her nightgown and robe.

Nina shrugs off the robe and drapes it over the chair with

her cloak and heads into the bedroom.

INT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Besides the bed, there is only a small side table with a pitcher on it and a mirror nailed into the opposite wall.

Nina sits down on the bed, unlaces her shoes and casts them aside before getting under the covers. Her eyes close as she drifts off to sleep.

INT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nina smooths out her skirt and quickly runs her fingers through her tousled hair. She leaves the bedroom and heads out the front door.

EXT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE - NIGHT

Nina walks in the opposite direction of Ralph, Michael, and Sarah.

EXT. FAIRY FLOWER GARDEN - NIGHT

She approaches a sprawling flower garden that is filled with roses, lavender, begonias, buttercups, daisies, and several other types of flowers. She walks through the garden and stops in front of a large red rose.

Hovering above the roses is a small orb of light that slowly begins to grow in size. Within moments, the delicate body and face of ROSELIA, queen of the fairies, becomes visible. She looks to be around Nina's age and wears a flowing ballgown that is made of rose petals. She floats towards Nina until is hovering in front of her face, a soft light silhouetting her in the dark.

ROSELIA

(softly)

Nina, when did you get here?

NINA

Earlier this morning. I'm sorry I didn't come to see you sooner.

ROSELIA

No need to be sorry. I assumed you had your reasons.

Roselia waves her hand and small sparks shoot from her hand and turn into water. The water falls on the roses, down their stems, and into the soil.

ROSELIA

How are you faring? I spoke with the trees earlier, and they explained to me what has happened. You aren't hurt, are you?

The water stops falling and Roselia flies over to sit on a nearby leaf, her dress fanning out around her.

NINA

No, I'm all right. But what if they have burned down my house? What if can never return?

Nina begins to cry and she buries her face in her hands.

Roselia flies back over to Nina and rests her hands on Nina's.

Other FAIRIES begin appearing from amongst the flowers. They look like small multicolored sparklers floating through the sky. They fly over to Nina and place their hands on her head, her shoulders, and her back. Their light creates sort of halo effect that encircles Nina.

Nina looks up at the fairies, her sobs slowly subsiding.

LARA, an older fairy, wearing a royal purple dress with purple flowers dotting it, comes up to float beside Roselia.

LARA

I wish that things didn't have to be this way for you witches and wizards. You mustn't worry, dear. You can still start over here, even make a new life for yourself.

NIA, a middle-aged fairy wearing a ruffled pink dress pops her head up past Nina's left shoulder.

NIA

That's easier said than done. I know there are people out there who have the same attitude as that wretched boy.

ROSELIA

You may be right, but Nina can't stop living her life because of one person. And as long as she's here, no harm can come to her.

Nina sniffles and wipes her eyes with the back of her hand.

NINA

Was I wrong Roselia? Should I have held my tongue and done what that boy asked?

ROSELIA

I think it's foolish of you to even say such a thing. You can't change the past, you can only move forward. Nothing good will come from dwelling on deeds that have already been done. You made the right choice.

NINA

But I've ruined everything.

ROSELIA

You must learn to have more faith in yourself. Challenges can always be overcome.

NINA

I think I might go and unpack my things.

ROSELIA nods and some of the fairies slowly begin to disperse.

LARA

I can sense you're still still tired. Some more rest would do you good.

NINA

I'll come back and see you all again.

Nina turns on her heel and heads out of the flower garden and back towards the cottages. The fairies watch as she disappears from view.

INT. NINA'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Arlo and his friend CEDRIC step into NINA'S kitchen. Cedric is Arlo's age but is slightly shorter. They scan their eyes over the kitchen. Everything looks just as Nina left it the night she departed.

CEDRIC

I don't know why the mayor wants us to look through her things. It's frustrating enough she wasn't here the night we came to burn her alive.

ARLO

If it bothers you that much, then shut up and help me look for stuff. The sooner we finish the sooner we can leave.

Cedric huffs and begins opening up some of the kitchen cabinets and taking out the contents.

Arlo shoots Cedric a dirty look once his back is turned. He kneels down in front of a bookshelf that is near the doorway. He begins pulling large, slightly dusty tomes off of the shelf and tossing them on the floor.

CEDRIC

She's got so many jars. We should have brought a cart to take everything away.

Cedric pulls out an emerald green bottle that still has liquid sloshing around inside and gingerly sets it on the counter.

Arlo stands up, brushes his trousers off and heads into Nina's bedroom.

INT. NINA'S HOME, BEDROOM - DAY

Arlo scans the bedroom rather hurriedly, shakes his head, and goes back out to join Cedric in the kitchen.

ARLO

I'm getting hungry.

Arlo steps toward an unopened drawer on the opposite end of the kitchen, his foot bumping against a basket with letters in it that is sticking out from underneath the kitchen table.

Arlo picks up the basket and pulls the top letter out, reading the name and address scrawled across the back of it. Scrawled across the back of the envelope were the words: *Molly Fletcher, Baron Adley's Castle, Kitchens.*

Arlo smirks and rips open the envelope and quickly reads the letter inside. He sets the basket down on the table and does the same to the rest of the letters, dropping them back in the basket after he's finished reading them.

Once he's read through all of the letters, Arlo picks up the basket once more and heads toward the front door.

ARLO

You can finish up here if you want,  
Cedric. I've got everything I need.

Cedric doesn't even lift his head and waves to ARLO.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Arlo heads down the street and rushes into town, some people glare at him as he passes while others smile. He passes several small shops before he reaches the mayor's house. He smooths his hair down and clears his throat before rapping on the mayor's bright red door.

Seconds later, the MAYOR opens the door. He narrows his eyes at Arlo.

MAYOR

Back so soon? And nothing to show for  
your little trip it seems?

The mayor wags his finger at Arlo. Arlo's grin grows wider as he holds up the basket of letters.

ARLO

On the contrary, sir, I have found  
something that I think will be very  
much to your liking. However, I would  
rather show it to you inside and away  
from prying eyes.

MAYOR

You had better not be wasting my time,  
boy.

The mayor ushers Arlo inside and closes the door behind them.

INT. MAYOR'S PARLOR - DAY

The mayor settles into an armchair and Arlo steps forward and sets the basket on a nearby table.

ARLO

While looking through the witch's things, I came across this. There are three letters in here, and each one is addressed to a different witch or wizard. It includes their name, and where they are located.

The mayor snatches the basket off the table and begins rifling through the letters, his eyes lighting up.

MAYOR

I cannot believe this!

The mayor picks up the letter addressed to Molly and waves it in the air.

MAYOR

The address on this letter is the address of the baron of these lands! If I am the one to tell him that there is a nasty little witch in his castle, he will reward me handsomely!

ARLO

(stiffly)

What shall you have me do, sir?

MAYOR

We must deliver these letters to their respective towns and provide our dear baron and all the other mayors with the story of their origin at once! These devilish fiends will be brought to their demise in no time!

INT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Nina is sound asleep in her bed. All of a sudden, a loud POUNDING on her front door pierces through the silence and she jolts awake.

Nina reaches under her bed and grabs a small knife. She holds it out in front of her as she cautiously walks toward the



front door.

INT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE, ENTRYWAY - DAY

NINA  
(shouting)  
Who's there?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Nina? Nina is that you?

Startled, Nina drops the knife on the kitchen table, races over to the door and flings it open. A MALE WIZARD wearing disheveled brown pants and a brown tunic stands in the doorway with a pack slung over his shoulders. He has a longer, chestnut beard, but he looks to be not much older than Nina. His eyes, which dart around nervously, are bloodshot.

EXT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE, ENTRYWAY - DAY

Nina flings her arms the wizard's waist and pulls him into a hug.

NINA  
Bennett, what are you doing here?

BENNETT (MALE WIZARD)  
I was chased out of my village!

Bennett pulls away from Nina and his shoulders seem to have relaxed a bit.

BENNETT  
I had just come back from helping a porcupine out of a snare, and when I got to the outskirts of town, the villagers chased me back into the forest, screaming about how they didn't want a wizard in their town. I was lucky enough to lose them before I even got close to the clearing. Michael told me you were here when I arrived.

Nina's eyes grow wide and she shivers.

NINA  
How did they find out you were a wizard?

BENNETT

I don't know! But what are you doing here? Traveling?

NINA

I was thinking the same thing when I saw you. Unfortunately, I am here for almost the same reason as you. I was chased out of my town after a boy that I refused to make a love potion for revealed to everyone that I was a witch. And now here you are, saying that almost the same thing happened to you. I don't know what to think, Bennett.

Bennett scratches his head.

BENNETT

How long have you been here?

NINA

Barely even two days.

BENNETT

This is most unfortunate. Although, at least neither of us are here alone.

Nina nods as Bennett pulls the straps on his pack a bit tighter.

BENNETT

Come on. We can talk while I unpack my things.

Bennett turns and begins walking towards the next nearest cottage. NINA closes her door and falls into step behind him.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING VEGETABLE GARDEN - DAY

Nina is picking mushrooms while Sarah, Michael, and Ralph watch her. She has a basket already more than half-filled with mushrooms sitting beside her.

Sarah suddenly looks at a point past Nina.

SARAH

Things keep getting stranger by the minute.

Nina turns her head to see a FIGURE running towards the back of cottages from the other edge of the forest. We see a flash of a skirt and a long blonde braid before the figure temporarily disappears behind the cottages.

RALPH

Either my eyes aren't what they used  
to be, or that's Lottie running around  
up there.

Nina exchanges a worried look with Sarah, Ralph, and Michael. She picks up her basket of mushrooms and turns toward the cottages.

Nina begins running towards the cottages. As she approaches we can hear Bennett's voice.

EXT. CLEARING COTTAGES - DAY

BENNETT (O.S.)

Lottie, not you too!

Nina rounds the corner and sees Bennett comforting LOTTIE, a younger witch with wind-blown blonde hair and disheveled clothes. She also has a pack hung over both her shoulders and another bag slung over her right shoulder.

NINA

What's going on?

Nina goes over to Lottie and pulls her into a tight hug.

BENNETT

She's been chased out of her town just  
like us!

NINA

I'm so sorry Lottie.

Nina pats Lottie's shoulder before releasing her. Lottie's eyes are downcast and Nina keeps her hand on Lottie's shoulder.

LOTTIE

Thank you, Nina. I'm sorry for you and  
Bennett too.

BENNETT

I still don't understand how this has  
happened. Nina, you got here first. Is  
there anything you can think of that

may have caused this?

Nina shakes her head.

BENNETT

What about you, Lottie? Did you notice anything off before you left town?

Lottie shakes her head, and then her eyes grow wide as she looks at Bennett and Nina.

LOTTIE

I didn't notice anything, but I did hear someone saying that an urgent message or a letter of some sort had come into town earlier in the day from Nina's town, and everyone was wondering what it was about.

At the word "letter", Nina's hand drops from Lottie's shoulder and she averts her gaze from Lottie and Bennett.

NINA

(whispers)

I know why we're all here. They must have found my letters.

BENNETT

Letters?

NINA

The day before I came to the clearing, I had been writing letters to both of you and Molly, but since I never got to send them. I ended up leaving them behind, but they already had your names and addresses on them.

Nina drops to the ground, her face into her hands, and her back heaving up and down as she starts to cry.

NINA

I've ruined everything. I'm so sorry.

Lottie kneels down and begins stroking Nina's hair.

LOTTIE

We don't blame you Nina. It's unfortunate, but it was still an accident. I just hope we were the only ones that were affected.

Nina reached out and grasps Lottie's free hand.

NINA

It was only you three.

BENNETT

I wonder when Molly will show up. The news must have made it to her by now.

LOTTIE

If that's the case, then I hope she gets here safely.

Lottie gently pulls at Nina's hand until she is standing.

LOTTIE

Come on. I can make us all some tea. I was able to grab some leaves before I left.

Nina nods silently, keeping a firm grip on Lottie's hand. Bennett moves to stand beside Nina and drapes his arm around her shoulders. The three of them walk back towards the third closest cottage.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING VEGETABLE GARDEN - DAY

Nina and Lottie are picking vegetables. Nina is staring off into the distance while Lottie is trying to have a conversation with her.

LOTTIE

Nina? Nina did you hear anything I just said?

Nina's head snaps up and she looks over at Lottie.

NINA

Oh, sorry Lottie. What were you saying?

Lottie rolls her eyes and Nina blushes. Lottie moves to kneel down in front of a row of carrots, dropping a wicker basket that is full of different types of vegetables down at her side.

LOTTIE

I was asking you if you minded if I put carrots in the stew. I'm surprised

you even heard me when I was shouting at you. You've seemed lost in your own thoughts all day.

NINA

Sorry, carrots are fine with me.

Nina sighs and moves to kneel next to Lottie, who is already reaching down to grasp onto a carrot.

NINA

I didn't sleep well last night. And this whole situation has got me feeling out of sorts.

LOTTIE

You still feel bad about what happened, don't you?

Lottie tugs a carrot out of the ground, spraying bits of dirt onto hers and Nina's skirts.

NINA

How could I not? My mistake ruined not only my life, but yours and Bennett's as well.

Lottie continues to move down the row of carrots with her basket, as Nina moves to pull up her first carrot.

LOTTIE

We already said we don't blame you for what happened. Besides, none of us can change what happened.

Lottie picks up the basket and moves to stand next to Nina. Nina slowly stands up and adds two carrots to the basket.

LOTTIE

You, me, Bennett, we can all figure out a solution to this. It may not be an easy solution, but we can figure something out. This situation only becomes hopeless if we lose hope.

Lottie gives Nina a wide, toothy smile.

LOTTIE

I bet having some good food in you will lift your spirits.

INT. BENNETT'S CLEARING COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bennett, Nina, and Lottie are all gathered around the kitchen table. Lottie goes over to ladle soup out of a pot hanging over a roaring fire in the fireplace.

The three of them start eating, laughing and talking in between bites.

EXT. FAIRY FLOWER GARDEN - DAY

Nina and Lottie pick flowers and help the fairies weed the garden.

Bennett walks by and waves. He is holding a small rabbit in his arms and has a bird perched on each shoulder.

INT. BENNETT'S CLEARING COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bennett is asleep in a kitchen chair, the rabbit curled up in his lap.

Nina and Lottie sit by the fire talking, cups of tea clutched in their hands.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING VEGETABLE GARDEN - DAY

Nina is out in the garden tending to some ginseng. She snaps to attention when she hears a RUSTLING coming from some nearby bushes.

She watches as a REDHEADED YOUNG WOMAN who looks to be about Nina's age emerges from the bushes. Her eyes immediately meeting Nina's. The young woman hikes up her dress and rushes over to Nina.

YOUNG WOMAN

Excuse me, do you know someone named  
Nina? I'm supposed to tell her that  
Molly sent me--

NINA

I am Nina. What do you know about  
Molly? Is she all right?

YOUNG WOMAN

No. She is being held hostage in Baron  
Adley's castle. Molly said you were  
her most trusted friend and that she

knew if anyone could free her, it was you.

NINA  
Who are you?

YOUNG WOMAN  
My name is Beatrice.

Nina's eyes grow wide as she stares at Beatrice.

NINA  
Beatrice? As in Baron Adley's daughter?

Beatrice nods.

NINA  
Molly has mentioned you in some of her letters. But how did you get here? This forest is enchanted. Only witches and wizards are able to pass through safely.

Beatrice holds up her necklace and reveals a metal pendant that is shaped like an oak leaf.

BEATRICE (YOUNG WOMAN)  
Molly charmed this necklace for me so that I could get through the forest.

NINA  
She took a great risk in sending you here.

BEATRICE  
She didn't send me. I offered to go.

NINA  
Why? Things between you "normal" folks and us witches and wizards are more problematic than ever before.

BEATRICE  
Would you rather have me do nothing and let Molly die?

Beatrice places her hands on her hips and Nina sighs.

NINA  
Of course not. I'm grateful that



you've come.

BEATRICE

You're the one whose letters they  
found, aren't they?

Nina's cheeks flush and her eyes fall to the ground. Beatrice moves closer to Nina and gently lifts her chin with her finger.

BEATRICE

Don't look so down, Nina. Molly sent  
me here so that you could save her.

Nina nods, her cheeks redder than before.

BEATRICE

Are there others here with you? When I  
overheard my father he mentioned that  
there were other letters found besides  
Molly's.

NINA

There's two others here besides me. A  
wizard named Bennett and a witch named  
Lottie.

Beatrice nods and Nina motions for Beatrice to follow her  
towards the cottages.

NINA

I'll introduce you to them. I'm sure  
they'll want to hear your story.

Nina begins walking and Beatrice falls into step beside her.

EXT. CLEARING COTTAGES - DAY

As they approach the cottages, Lottie rushes out her front  
door, her eyes growing wide when she sees Beatrice.

LOTTIE

I saw you walking up. Nina, who is  
this?

BEATRICE

I'm Beatrice. My father, Baron Adley,  
was sent Nina's letter that was meant  
for Molly. He's locked Molly up inside  
his castle, and she sent me to get  
Nina to help free her.

LOTTIE

What?!

Nina and Beatrice both shush Lottie.

Bennett emerges from his cottage. His hair is tousled and he rubs his eyes and lets out a yawn. Bennett looks over at Beatrice and rubs his eyes again.

BENNETT

Am I still asleep?

Bennett walks over to stand next to Lottie.

LOTTIE

Molly's been kidnapped! And she sent Beatrice here to get Nina to help free her! Oh, this is horrible!

Bennett places a hand on Lottie's shoulder and turn to Beatrice.

BENNETT

Would you like to come inside? We can all discuss this over tea.

BEATRICE

That would be wonderful, thank you.

Beatrice gives Bennett a small smile before following him inside, Nina and Lottie following close behind.

INT. BENNETT'S CLEARING COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

NINA

How exactly did you and Molly meet?

Beatrice and Nina sit down at the kitchen table. Lottie goes over to the cabinet and gets out four mugs and begins filling them with tea leaves. Bennett goes over to the fireplace to stoke the small fire that is already burning inside it.

BEATRICE

Molly has been teaching me how to bake ever since she started working for my father. I first ran into her in the garden when she was out picking some fruits and vegetables for supper. I got to talking to her, and she had so many amazing stories to tell me. I would always go into the kitchens and

sit with her while she worked, and eventually I started helping her.

LOTTIE

But how did you find out she was a witch?

Lottie brings the four mugs over and sets them down on the table before sitting down next to Nina.

BEATRICE

Honestly, I found out by accident. I went into the kitchen to visit Molly one day and found that all the spoons were stirring themselves inside the pots, but there was no one to be found except Molly and she was all the way in the pantry. I was a little taken aback at first. But I didn't see any reason to make a big fuss about it. She was scared that I was going to tell my father about her, but I swore I wouldn't. She had always been so kind to me.

BENNETT

How long has Molly been locked up?

BEATRICE

About a day and a half.

Nina grimaces and Lottie shivers.

BEATRICE

I came as quickly as I could today because they're making preparations for her execution.

NINA

NO!

Bennett's head snaps up and Lottie puts her hand over her mouth. Both Lottie and Bennett's eyes are wide.

BENNETT

When is it going to happen?

BEATRICE

From what I heard it seemed like the execution would be taking place about two days from now.

Nina pushes her chair away from the table and turns toward the door and rushes outside

EXT. CLEARING COTTAGES - DAY

Nina walks towards her cottage and steps inside.

INT. NINA'S CLEARING COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Nina heads over to where her satchel is hanging from one of her kitchen chairs. She grabs the satchel and hurries back outside.

EXT. CLEARING COTTAGES - DAY

Lottie gives her a confused look as Nina walks back in.

INT. BENNETT'S CLEARING COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

BENNETT

What are you doing?

Bennett walks over to the kitchen table with the kettle. He begins pouring water into each of the mugs.

Nina sits back down in her chair and begins pulling sheets of paper and some quills and ink out of her satchel.

NINA

I'm going to write letters to all the witches and wizards that I know. Hopefully some of the ones that live nearby will come out and help me rescue Molly. I might write to some of my friends from town as well.

BENNETT

Why do you say "I" as if you are the only one who wants to help?

Nina lets out a long sigh.

NINA

I don't want to put any of you in more danger than I already have.

LOTTIE

Are you forgetting that Molly is our friend too? We're not going to let you do this alone, Nina.

Lottie snatches a piece of paper and a quill from the center of the table, nearly knocking over her mug.

BEATRICE

You also won't know how to get into the castle without my help. I think I may also know a few people I can write to.

BENNETT

I'll go get some more ink.

Bennett sets the kettle down by the fire and heads down the hall towards his bedroom.

NINA

We'll have to come up with a plan.

Bennett returns and sets a bottle of ink down next to the paper.

BENNETT

Certainly. I'm glad that you're saying "we" now instead of "I".

Bennett sits down and begins writing a letter.

As each person finishes a letter, they add it to a small pile that is growing on the floor next to Nina's feet.

INT. BENNETT'S CLEARING COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bennett opens the window and various birds fly in, followed by Roselia and some other fairies.

Bennett and Lottie hand the fairies and the birds the letter and wave to them through the window as they fly off one by one.

Lottie turns around and smiles when she sees Nina fast asleep and resting her head against Beatrice's shoulder. Beatrice lightly strokes Nina's hair and grins and Lottie.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Arlo is walking down the street. Suddenly, ANNE, a girl about Arlo's age with long brown braided hair with ribbons, steps into his path and glares at him.

ARLO

Anne, what a pleasant surprise! I was just on my way to the pub. Care to join me?

Anne shakes her head. She places her hands on Arlo's shoulders and ushers him into a nearby alley.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE MARGARET'S BAKERY - DAY

She shoves Arlo up against a wall of one of the buildings and he gulps.

ANNE

What have you done to Nina? I know you were the one that caused the raid on her home and not the bloody mayor.

ARLO

I-I don't know who-

Anne smacks Arlo's face, his left cheek instantly turning a bright red.

ANNE

Do you have any idea what you have done? Nina was a good person! She helped so many people here recover from their illnesses. She's the reason my mother is still alive and didn't succumb to her fever last winter. I can't imagine what she could have done to you to make you chase her out of her own home!

Arlo gulps again.

ANNE

My father says there's word that other witches and wizards have been driven out of other nearby towns due to letters that were found here. There was even a witch discovered to be living in the baron's castle.

Tears slowly begin running down Anne's face.

ANNE

They're going to execute her tomorrow. I hope you're happy that you've ruined so many lives.

Anne turns on her heel and storms out of the alley. She rounds a corner and disappears from view.

Arlo lets out a sigh and slides down the wall to sit on the ground. He watches as the shadows of the buildings slowly grow longer around him.

Arlo closes his eyes and lets out another sigh. He stands up, walks out of the alley, and steps into the bakery, a bell tinkling as he opens and shuts the door.

INT. MARGARET'S BAKERY - DAY

Margaret pops her head up from behind the counter that is lined with small cakes, pastries, and loaves of bread. When she sees Arlo, she frowns and turns her back to him.

MARGARET

We're closing soon. Make it quick.

ARLO

I need your help. It's about Nina.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - DAY

Bennett, Nina, Lottie, and Beatrice are all gathered at the edge of the forest. There's a flock of about fifty sparrows scattered along the tree branches.

A large group of fairies are also present. They hover between Nina and Lottie.

Inside the forest, we can see glimpses of fox, deer, and rabbits, their eyes fixed on Nina attentively.

Nina secures a belt to her waist. The belt has a sheath attached to it, and we can see the hilt of a dagger peeking out of the sheath.

About a couple hundred feet ahead, we can see a stone castle surrounded by small hills and gardens.

BEATRICE

The courtyard where the execution is set to take place is just beyond that hill. The trees still go up most of the hill, so you should be able to look down and see if anyone's come to help us without being noticed.

Lottie nods silently and her and Roselia retreat further back into the forest before making their way towards the top of the hill.

BEATRICE  
(to Nina, whispering)  
Nervous?

NINA  
Definitely.

Nina follows Beatrice's gaze to a window that's about two stories off the ground.

NINA  
Is Molly up there?

BEATRICE  
She should be. I doubt they would have moved her yet. How are your climbing skills?

NINA  
Not too bad. I've climbed a lot of trees in my spare time.

Nina smirks and shoots Beatrice a playful look, her eyebrows raised. Beatrice grins.

NINA  
And yourself?

BEATRICE  
Pretty good. We can race each other to the top.

Lottie races back up to the group, Roselia following close behind her.

LOTTIE  
They've come! The other witches and wizards, and some of our other friends and villagers. Nina, even your friend Margaret is here! They're all wearing the white flowers we asked them to wear.

BEATRICE  
I told you they would be here.

Roselia nods in agreement.



ROSELIA

We can go and alert them as soon as  
you two head into the castle.

NINA

Then it's time for us to put our plan  
into action.

Nina motions for Bennett to step forward.

Bennett moves to stand beside Nina and Beatrice, some of the  
deer moving forward as well.

BENNETT

(to the animals)  
Are you all ready?

Some of the animals nod and the birds chirp in response.

BENNETT

All right then, birds and rabbits into  
the castle right...now!

Bennett points towards the castle and the sparrows and  
rabbits rush forward. Some of the sparrows fly into the open  
window and other scatter across the grounds, the shouts of  
confused guards becoming apparent.

The deer and fox wait a few moments before taking off across  
the grounds to join the sparrows and rabbits.

Beatrice tugs at Nina's arm and they break into a sprint  
towards the castle. They push past the last row of trees and  
hop over a small line of bushes surrounding part of the  
castle yard.

EXT. BARON'S CASTLE YARD - DAY

Nina looks to the left and sees a guard swinging his sword at  
a group of sparrows, while a couple of other sparrows peck at  
his shins and his helmet.

Nina looks to the right and sees a crowd gathered around a  
large wooden pyre. Her eyes stay trained on the pyre, almost  
causing her to run into the castle wall.

Nina looks over at Beatrice and the two of them nod at each  
other before beginning to climb the walls of the castle.

Beatrice reaches the window first and hoists herself inside.  
She reaches a hand out to Nina and helps pull her inside.

INT. BARON'S CASTLE, HALLWAY - DAY

BEATRICE

This way.

Beatrice takes off the torchlit hallway, Nina following close behind her. They head up a small flight of stairs and as they reach the top, they come face to face with two GUARDS who are standing in front of a large wooden door.

The GUARD'S eyes widen when they see Beatrice and Nina.

GUARD 1

Miss Beatrice, I was not expecting to see you here today. I thought you would not be back for another week.

GUARD 2

Who is that with you?

The second guard narrows his eyes at Nina and she meets his eyes fearlessly.

BEATRICE

She is one of my new maids. I was sent here by my father to retrieve the witch and bring her down to the courtyard. Now, please unlock the door for me so that I may retrieve the witch.

GUARD 2

But your father said he wanted to bring her down himself.

Beatrice brings herself up to full height and glares at the guards.

BEATRICE

Are you questioning my authority? I was not asking you to unlock the door, I was telling you.

GUARD 1

As you wish, Miss Beatrice.

The guard reaches for a set of keys that is hanging from his belt. The guard turns to unlock the cell door but stops when a SHOUT from outside pierces through the air.

GUARD 1  
What was that?

The guards step back and allow Beatrice and Nina to enter the cell.

BEATRICE  
Probably just an enthusiastic  
villager. You know how excited they  
get for these types of things.

Beatrice and Nina pass the guards.

INT. BARON'S CASTLE, CELL - DAY

We can see Molly huddled in the corner of the cell, her hands bound in front of her. Her clothing and strawberry blonde hair are wrinkled and dirty.

Molly turns to look at Beatrice and Nina, and we can see dark bags under her eyes. Molly smiles at Beatrice and Nina and Beatrice gently grabs her shoulder and leads her out of the cell and past the two guards.

INT. BARON'S CASTLE, HALLWAY - DAY

The three women begin walking down the stairs at a brisk pace. Once they are out of sight of the guards Nina pulls her dagger out of its sheath and cuts the ropes binding Molly's hands.

Nina sheaths her dagger and pulls Molly into a tight hug and gently strokes her hair.

MOLLY  
I knew you two would come for me.

BEATRICE  
You're not free just yet. We still  
have to get out of here.

Nina releases Molly and the three women run down the hallway towards the window.

Beatrice heads out of the window first, followed by Molly and then Nina.

EXT. BARON'S CASTLE YARD - DAY

After Nina touches the ground, she follows Beatrice and Molly back towards the forest. They make it to the edge of the

garden when a bellowing VOICE stops them in their tracks.

VOICE

Halt! I command you to stop at once!

Molly and Nina continue to run a few more feet, but stop when they realize that Beatrice is not following them.

Molly and Nina turn to follow Beatrice's gaze and see a burly man wearing a long black tunic lined with white fur. He is flanked by two GUARDS on either side.

MOLLY

(whispers to NINA)

That's the baron.

BARON ADLEY

Beatrice? What on earth are you doing?

The guards drew their swords, and Nina immediately lets out a long, shrill WHISTLE.

Sparrows flew from atop the castle and down from the trees and headed straight for the baron and the guards and surround them.

Another WHISTLE sounds from a nearby hill and Nina, Molly, and Beatrice take off towards the top of that next hill.

EXT. HILL OUTSIDE BARON'S CASTLE - DAY

BARON ADLEY

Guards! Don't let them get away!

Bennett and a couple of deer are standing at the top of the hill and the three women run towards him.

BENNETT

The guards are starting to come out from the courtyard!

Bennett points down the hill and into the courtyard where a group of GUARDS is beginning to make its way up the hill towards Bennett, the deer, Molly, Nina, and Beatrice.

Nina reaches to draw her dagger, but stops when a CONCH SHELL HORN echoes through the castle's main square.

Nina looks across the square and sees Lottie with a conch shell to her lips.

At the sound of the conch, nearly half the crowd throws back the hood of their cloaks to reveal various white flowers pinned to their breasts.

The fairies fly out from behind Lottie, across the courtyard, and towards the GUARDS currently making their way up the hill. A burst of light comes from the group of fairies and the guards fall to the ground with a cry, their hands over their faces.

Someone in the crowd lets out a YELL, and the PEOPLE wearing white flowers rush forward, some of them carrying swords and others carry walking sticks, broomsticks, and pans.

The PEOPLE not wearing flowers turn towards the others and begin engaging in combat, followed by the guards.

Beatrice lets out a CRY and charges down the hill. Nina, Molly, and Bennett follow after her, the deer running alongside Bennett.

Molly waves her hand over the ground under the guards and the grass and flowers begin to grow and snake up their legs, trapping them.

Baron Adley appears at the castle's main entrance atop a black horse, followed by another group of GUARDS.

BARON ADLEY

Take these heathens out at once!

Bennett lets out another long, high-pitched WHISTLE and almost instantly, the shadows of falcons begin to stretch over the crowd.

Nina turns her head and sees Margaret running through the crowd, a large carving knife in her hand. A guard lunges for her and she elbows him in the gut.

Lottie is following close behind Margaret.

Nina winces as flames shoot out of Lottie's hand and onto the arm of a guard that was dragging a YOUNG WITCH away by her hair. The guard SCREAMS in pain and drops the young witch's hair and she scrambles away.

NINA

(to Margaret)

I'm so glad you're all right.

Nina fixes her eyes on the ground underneath the baron's

horse as he gallops toward Beatrice.

Nina furrowed her brows and the earth under the horses's hooves split and cracks. The horse rears, almost throwing the baron to the ground.

MARGARET

I could say the same about you.

Margaret swings her knife into a guard's sword. Nina waves her hand and a stone flies through the air and hits the guard in the side of the head. Margaret kicks the guard in his left knee and he crumples to the ground.

We see Arlo running through the crowd towards Nina, a white flower pinned to his lapel and a sword in his hands.

ARLO

Stop!

Nina raises her hand, but Margaret stops her.

MARGARET

Don't worry.

ARLO

Stop!

The fighting slows and then slowly stops as Arlo approaches Nina and Margaret.

Beatrice backs up and reaches for Nina's hand, and firmly grasps it in her own.

Bennett, Lottie, and the rest of their comrades back up to form a tight ring around Nina, Beatrice, and Margaret. The fairies come up and hover over the group's heads.

Arlo lowers his sword and looks at Nina.

ARLO

May I say something? Please?

Nina removes her hand from Beatrice's grasp and steps forward. Roselia comes down to float alongside Nina.

NINA

You have already ruined my life and the lives of countless others. What more could you possibly have to say to me, or to any of us?

ARLO

That I realize I was wrong. I was wrong to treat you the way I did, about deciding that I had the right to ruin the lives of people who have done me no harm, and so many other things.

Margaret moves to stand beside Nina and Roselia and motions for Arlo to continue.

ARLO

This will not make up for the deeds that have already been done. But I wanted to promise you that I see the error of my ways, and I do not want to ruin anyone else's life. Instead, I would rather change my own.

NINA

You realize that you have to mean what you're saying, right? These can't be empty words.

Nina steps closer to Arlo so they are now face to face.

ARLO

I promise you they won't be.

Nina offers Arlo her right hand and the two of them shake hands. Arlo gives Nina a small smile as MURMURS go through the crowd around them.

BARON ADLEY

This is outrageous! These witches and their evil ways must be stopped at once!

BEATRICE

It isn't evil father! This fighting is what is what is evil. This fighting is what must be stopped.

Nina looks at Margaret and Margaret drops her knife on the ground.

More WHISPERS go through the crowd as the majority of people slowly drop their weapons and move to stand around Nina, Margaret, and Arlo.

A small group of people move closer to the baron, while others begin to leave the courtyard all together.

NINA  
(to ARLO)  
I think it's time we all went back home.

ARLO  
I agree.

INT. BARON'S CASTLE, BEATRICE'S ROOM - DAY

Beatrice is packing up clothes and books and placing them into a pack on her four poster bed.

The baron walks in and frowns.

BARON ADLEY  
Beatrice I can't permit you to leave.  
You know how I feel about those damn witches.

Beatrice's back is still turned to her father. She SIGHS and closes the pack and turns around to face her father.

BEATRICE  
That's all right, father. I wasn't going to ask for you permission anyways.

The baron's eyes widen in surprise as Beatrice brushes past him towards the door and out into the hall.

BEATRICE (O.S.)  
Don't worry, I'll still come back for holidays if you want me to.

The baron stands in the middle of Beatrice's bedroom, unmoving. After a few moments, he walks over to the window and watches Beatrice and Nina walk away, arms linked.

INT. NINA'S HOME, ENTRYWAY - DAY

Nina and Beatrice stand in the doorway of Nina's house. Nina's eyes grow wide as she sees that her jars of potions and dishes have been thrown around the counter and many have been smashed. Her kitchen chairs are lying sideways on the floor and her books are strewn all over the floor.

BEATRICE  
So this is your home.



INT. NINA'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Nina drops her pack and hurries past Beatrice to stand her kitchen chairs back up.

NINA

Please try and ignore the mess.  
Obviously I haven't been able to  
clean.

Beatrice drops her pack next to Nina's and walks over and places her hands on Nina's shoulders.

BEATRICE

Nina, it's fine.

Nina smiles at Beatrice and leans in to kiss her, but a KNOCKING at the door startles Nina. Beatrice smirks.

Margaret enters the house, followed by her SON and DAUGHTER. Margaret's son is holding cleaning cloths, Margaret is carrying a bucket of water, and her daughter holds a bouquet of chrysanthemums.

MARGARET

I thought you might need some help  
tidying up.

BEATRICE

We would love some help.

Beatrice winks at Nina and goes over to grab the bucket out of Margaret's hands.

Margaret smiles at Nina and gives her daughter a slight push towards Nina.

The little girl slowly walks up to Nina and hands her the chrysanthemums.

NINA

Thank you very much. Would you like to  
help me find a place for them?

The little girl looks up at Nina and smiles. Nina reaches her hand out and the girl takes it, and together they head into the kitchen.

BEATRICE

(to NINA)

You should write a letter to Molly

later and tell her we made it home  
safely.

## References

- Attebery, Brian. "Reinventing Masculinity in Fairy Tales by Men." *Marvels & tales*. 32.2 (2018): n. pag. Web.
- Chang, Ann. "A Woman Alone: The Depiction of Spinsters in Irish Women's Short Stories." *Estudios Irlandeses*, vol. 10, 2015, pp. 44–57. Web.
- Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine Hennard. "Queering the Fairy Tale Canon: Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch*." *Short Story Criticism*, edited by Lawrence J. Trudeau, vol. 254, Gale, 2018. *Gale Literature Resource Center*. Web. Originally published in *Fairy Tales Reimagined*, edited by Susan Redington Bobby, McFarland, 2009, pp. 13-30.
- Holden, Katherine. "Odd Women? Spinsters, Lesbians and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850s–1930s, by Emma Liggins." *Women's history review*. 26.4 (2017): 669–670. Web.
- McGillis, Roderick. "'A fairytale is just a fairytale': George MacDonald and the queering of fairy." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2003, p. 86+. *Gale Literature Resource Center*. Web.
- Orme, Jennifer. "Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's 'Kissing the Witch.'" *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, pp. 116–130. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Warman, Brittany. "'I Am the Wolf: Queering 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Snow White and Rose Red' in the Television Show Once Upon a Time.'" *Humanities* 5.2 (2016): 41. *Crossref*. Web.